

Cattleman Recognized – By Lura Roti

Each year the American Maine-Anjou Association recognizes two producers for their efforts to promote and improve the breed. This year we recognize Dennis Garwood, Green Valley Cattle Co., as the Maine Man and Everett Forkner, Truline Maines, as the Maine Breeder of the year.

“When making a selection for each of these awards, the committee looks for operations that make a difference,” says John Boddicker, executive vice president of the AMAA. Regardless of their size and scale of operation – both Green Valley and Truline’s breeding programs are advancing the Maine-Anjou breed within the beef industry. The operations are well respected which is evidenced by the herd prefix presence in many pedigrees across the country.”

From Pasture to Showring – Dennis Garwood, Maine Man of The Year

Dennis Garwood has been serious about registered Maine-Anjou cattle since he was in high school. “The years in 4-H and FFA had a lot to do with sparking my interest in cattle – I’ve always been somewhat competitive,” says Garwood, 52, owner of Green Valley Cattle Co., Atkinson, Neb. His dad, Evan, helped him and his brother, Arden, build up their herds in the early years by giving them a few heifers each year.

As a sophomore in high school Garwood artificially inseminated his first 20 cows. When he graduated from college he returned to his family’s ranch to begin his career raising registered Maine-Anjou cattle. The herd of 20 quickly grew. Today, he runs about 450-head of registered Maine-Anjou and Angus cows.

After spending many years in the show ring, Garwood says although he still exhibits at the National Western Stock Show, today the commercial cattleman receives most of his attention. “The commercial cattleman is the bread and butter in the long haul. Purebred breeders can sell amongst ourselves for a while, but for cattle to be viable for the long haul, they have to have merit in the commercial sector and offer genetics that improve the commercial cattleman’s herd,” says Garwood, who feels that the Maine-Anjou breeders excel in providing commercial cattlemen with quality genetics.

“The breed has made great strides in areas that needed improvement. It’s almost like they aren’t the same cattle that they were when we first began raising them,” says Garwood, who has served on the Maine-Anjou national board. “As we move into the future we need to do things that will ensure more usage in the commercial sector.” Uniformity, carcass quality, calving ease and maternal traits top his list. “We’ve really concentrated on udder quality and milk production,” Garwood says.

In addition to these traits, Garwood has focused his genetic program on developing homozygous black, homozygous solid patterned and more lately homozygous polled cattle. “It’s rare for there to be all three genetic traits – I want the progeny to be solid black and polled to increase uniformity and consistency,” he says.

Involved with the Maine-Anjou breed since the breed was introduced to North America, Garwood sees a bright future for the breed. “It’s a process. We continue to work hard. I always say, if this calf crop isn’t better than the last one, then I’m not doing my job,” says Garwood, who hosted his first fall female sale Dec. 12, 2009. “I, like many Maine producers, have worked to improve the breed from the beginning. As we move forward we need to plan like we’ll be here for the next 20 years and improve upon what we are currently doing.”



*Dennis Garwood, Green Valley Cattle Company, Atkinson, Neb.
2009 Maine Man of the Year*