



# SMALL TOWN ROOTS. BIG INDUSTRY IMPACTS.

## DIX ANGUS RANCH ~ STOCKTON, KANSAS

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**G**rowth is something Jeff and Cody Dix take very seriously when it comes to their operation, and not just with size and scope. This father-son operation is always looking honestly at their herd in order to market the most competitive genetics possible.

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by Celsey Crabtree

The Dix Angus Ranch originated, and still prospers, in Northwest Kansas as a family-run operation that raises high-quality registered Angus cattle, produces row crops, and runs a custom harvest business. The ranch began as a small-scale operation in the early 1950's with Robert and Maxine Dix raising multiple cattle breeds such as Hereford, Angus, Simmental, and Gelbvieh. Robert and his son, Jeff, continued to specialize their ranch and focused on raising commercial Angus cattle.

Throughout the mid-90's, Jeff would buy groups of replacement quality heifers from

places as far away as Montana to as near as his neighbors. Then, he would background the heifers until they were AI bred and turned to pasture for the summer with clean-up bulls. Soon after, the heifers would be marketed as bred heifers or cow-calf pairs.

Intending to produce heifer bulls for their clean-up program, Jeff suggested the idea to his son, Cody, to purchase his first registered Angus cow in 1999 from Green Garden Angus of Ellsworth, Kansas. Jeff and Cody continued to buy registered cattle from Green Garden Angus and raise calving-ease bulls suitable for their heifers. To continue to grow their operation, they increased their registered female herd by buying from other notable Angus ranches, including Molitor Angus and BJ Angus.

Over the years, the registered cowherd has outgrown the heifer and commercial herd operation. The registered Angus herd is now the primary focus of Jeff and Cody, who run approximately 350 registered Angus cows.

Cody, now the third-generation on his family's operation, graduated from Kansas State University (KSU) with a bachelor's degree in feed science and management in May 2011. Following graduation, he came home to work alongside his dad.

Cody strongly attributes the ranch's success to his dad, Jeff, while he was attending college several hours away from home and explained, "Dad is the real backbone of the ranch."



**Jeff also offers custom forage harvesting with different options of heads to use for any given job. They also have five supporting trucks.**

During his time at KSU, Cody worked for, and learned from, John Slocombe of BJ Angus while in Manhattan, Kansas.

"John Slocombe has been a huge mentor for me. John gave us the opportunity to market bulls and some females in his sale," Cody said.

Not only did Slocombe give the Dix's the chance to sell roughly 35 yearling bulls, they taught Cody the ins and outs of generating a profitable sale. Cody was able to learn how a cattle sale was run from sale day preparations, building a sale book, and all the prep work going into a successful event.

## **PUT 'EM TO THE TEST...**

In 2010, Cody wanted to see how the bulls being produced stacked up to others in the country and took his first group of bulls to the Midland Bull Test in Columbus, Montana. Three of the five bulls qualified for the sale.

"I was really excited to have three bulls make it to the sale, but we were towards the bottom end of the sale, which didn't sit well with me," Cody said.

After coming home, Cody decided to make a change to their breeding program.

Cody decided to add more performance qualities to their bulls, in addition to the low maintenance, calving easy traits they were already selecting for. Cody explained that AI and embryo transfer shaped the genetic improvements that customers wanted, and both techniques are still a pertinent part of the registered herd today. With the help of Cross Country Genetics, the Dix's transfer roughly 120 embryos every year.

In 2018, eight years after he returned from his first Midland Bull Test with some growth goals in mind, the Dix's had the #1 slot at the Midland Bull Sale, which proved their dramatic improvement and dedication to progress. Overall, Cody took 12 bulls, all of which qualified for the sale, and most were in the front half. All the while, the ranch sold bulls private treaty and through the BJ Angus annual sale.

"In just seven or eight years, we went from almost the last slot in the sale to the first. We worked hard to get there," Cody expressed.

In 2019, the Dix Angus family came together to host its first bull and heifer sale at Heartland Regional Stockyards in Plainville, Kansas. They offered 94 bulls and a package of 60 commercial replacement heifers. The sale has continued to grow, and the Dix Angus Ranch will host its next annual sale on March 13, 2023.

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***-Cody Dix***





*Left: Haley, Marianne, Jeff, Cody, Brook, and Chloe Dix.*

*Below: Hindquarter was the Dix Angus Ranch top selection at the 2015 Midland Bull Test, where he was the 5th highest selling bull. His sire, HARB Stur-D, was the high selling bull at the 2012 Midland Bull Test for \$50,000.*



Cody attributes a portion of the sale's success to the entire family pitching in to help. In addition to his father, his father's wife, Marianne, his brother, Brook, and sisters, Haley and Chloe, all help with the cattle when needed and are an integral part of sale day.

"Marianne helps with day-to-day work and is there to keep Dad and I in line. Brook lives in Stockton and helps with sale day prep as well as clerks the sale. Haley lives in Texas and Chloe is at school at KSU, but both always try to come back to help. It's really special that everyone tries to come back for sale day," Cody explained.

## **MADE FOR THE COMMERCIAL CATTLEMAN...**

The Dix ranch may have registered cattle, but they run them like a commercial herd.

"Our main focus is reproductive efficiency, maternal excellence, soundness, longevity, and overall performance, and those traits of the Angus breed are superior for our customers," Cody described.

From summer grass, cattle are run on corn and milo stalks until calving and will calve on the range, not in a barn.

“The cows have to know what they’re doing, and the calves have to get up and survive,” Cody said.

The maternal side of the cow is crucial to the success of the calves and the herd. Additionally, the cows must have longevity, as it can be costly to replace these females from year to year. This focus on practicality and functionality has not only been beneficial within their herd, but for the commercial cattleman they work with. With this list of high standards of expectations, the Dix’s also expect their cattle to exhibit high-quality carcass traits and that coupled with an appealing phenotype.

Continuing to improve the profitability of beef cattle operations, the Dix’s sold a homegrown bull to Beef-360, a bull stud operation in Missouri in 2021. Beef-360 named the bull D A R Stockton 0101. The bulls offered represent the top genetics in their respective breeds - proven through progeny and/or backed up by some of the best bulls and cow families available.

“Stockton” was produced from the HARB Princess Vel 980 JH cow, which in recent years has been the cornerstone cow of the Dix’s herd.

“The Princess Vel, Velda, and Maxine, named after my grandmother as she was the glue the held everyone together, are the most prominent cow families in the herd towards pushing us to the next level of our goals to be met,” Cody explained.

Even with the successes of the ranch, Cody explained he’s never satisfied and has significant goals for the future of the ranch. At the top of his list is a continuation of building the herd’s quality and consistency to produce what buyers want. Furthermore, expanding the ranch’s market geographically and being a top breeder of registered Angus cattle are goals Cody is set on accomplishing .

## A PERSONAL TOUCH...

Jeff and Cody take great pride in their operation and believe the work they put in every day sets their ranch apart from others. The family does everything themselves: raising their feed and crops for their cattle; managing a custom forage harvesting business; fitting, picturing, and videoing their sale cattle; and doing as much in-house marketing as possible.

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D A R Stockton 0101 comes from the Dix’s Princess Vel cow family, who has been the cornerstone cow of the Dix’s herd.

Because both men work closely with their cattle, it gives them the ability to know their herd and the confidence to produce and sell cattle based on the customer’s wants and needs. In addition, Cody tries to learn as much as possible about each cow and bull before breeding, including knowing the EPD’s and existing progeny data. This data allows the ranch to focus on traits that are economically relevant to them and their customers.

Another of Cody’s mentors, Mike Molitor of Molitor Angus, explained that Cody is very progressive for his age and is truly one of a kind. Cody has earned respect from many ranchers by being highly motivated, knowledgeable, and determined to improve. Cody and Jeff Dix have made their mark on the Angus breed and industry and have no plans to slow down.