

Since 1954

GRASS & GRAIN

Published by **AG PRESS**

53rd Year

No. 43

January 1, 2008

\$1.00



Persistence pays for area cattlemen

By **Gary Fike**

Donald and Dale Krouse understand commitment. If they had the time, they could write a book about consistency, persistence and hard work, too.

The brothers have farmed together for almost 60 years, raising corn, soybeans, wheat, hay and great Angus cattle near Westmoreland. It's been their life.

They learned the value of retained ownership a long time ago.

"We've been feeding out our own calves since 1948 or 1949," Donald says. "We started that because we never felt like the auction barns paid us the true value of our calves."

Dale adds, "We decided to market them ourselves after feeding them out."

Like most producers, they tried other breeds, both English and Continental. "But we always came back to Angus," Dale says.

"Too much up and down," his brother puts in. "Too much inconsistency. It seemed like we ended up with calving problems, hard pulls and then 'dumb calves' that wouldn't get up and suck their mothers. We just really weren't very happy with what we got."

Among their many reasons for breed loyalty, Donald was particularly impressed with Angus calf vigor. "They jump up and start nursing right away," he says. "We also like the disposition on the cattle. At our age (he is 79; Dale is 74), we don't move as fast as we used to," he says with a smile.

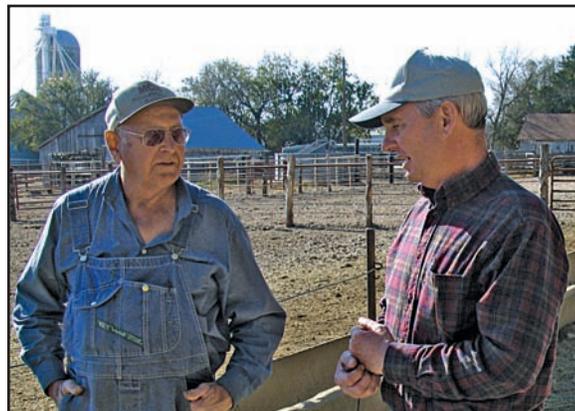
Good health is an added benefit. "We don't get many sick calves, and this has helped their performance in the feedlot, too," adds Dale.

They typically market their cattle to the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB)-licensed National Beef. The market rewards them with grid premiums. Sharing the past two years of carcass data shows that.

In 2006, the Krouse duo fed 188 steers and heifers that achieved nearly 34% Certified Angus Beef ® brand, including 4.8% USDA Prime, with 89% Choice or higher and only 4% Yield Grade (YG) 4 cattle.

The next year, it only got better. On 166 head that went 92% Choice or higher, 61% were CAB or CAB Prime (12%), nearly four times the national average for 2007. Cash prices were relatively attractive, but these cattle brought back premiums of up to \$89 per head over the cash equivalent.

The Krouse Brothers have bought their bulls for the past 15 years from Good Farms of Olsburg. They credit bulls from the farm, owned by Craig and Amy Good, for increasing productivity and profitability in the 250-head, spring-calving Krouse herd.



Donald Krouse visits with Craig Good about the bulls he's been using. Good has been providing the Westmoreland farmer the genetics that have allowed him to capture additional carcass premiums for the cattle they have finished.



That's because they retain heifers from those bulls to breed, and the Goods know they need everything from maternal to carcass traits. "We always look through the bulls before Craig and Amy's sale," says Dale. "We visit with them about which ones they might recommend, too. We trust them and their judgment."

The relationship goes back almost 30 years. Craig's father, Don, was the head of the animal science department at Kansas State University from 1968 until his retirement in 1985. "Dr. Don" met the Krouse Brothers in the 1970s, and the family friendship developed from there.

Craig is quick to praise the pair.

"Donald and Dale are just great guys. Hard working, honest — just the best people. This is a life-long effort of theirs, and they've succeeded."

The two are ready to slow down a bit, although not give it up completely, says Donald. "But, we are planning to sell a few cows and make it a little easier to manage."

Sixty years has taught these two more than a little about the advantage of retained ownership when you know you have good cattle. The long-term relationship with a trusted Angus breeder helped improved consistency in their cattle, so that more of them earn the premiums that flow from meeting consumer demand.