

By Kellie Carolan

Four generations with plans for the future

Dale Studer Family Shorthorns are the 2010 Iowa Seedstock Producers of the Year

Studer Shorthorns began under the watchful eye of Ben Studer, Dale's grandfather. Now four generations later, the agricultural roots Ben placed in Iowa and in his family are still active and growing. Dale remains at the helm of the Studer Shorthorn operation providing a no-nonsense, honest approach in the seedstock and cattle industries.

The focus

For four generations, the Studer family has focused on cattle that will work for both commercial and seedstock producers. This focus on economic traits drives the type of cattle at the Studer operation. Dale evaluates cattle for economically important traits with-

out compromise. This has paid off not only for the Studer operation, but more importantly for his customers. Dale says, "Customers have continually come back and said, 'My best cows are the ones from you or she never missed having a good calf.'" Nothing gives Dale greater pride than knowing that his genetics are influencing the Shorthorn breed and that his breeding program is working for the commercial producer.

The females

About 80 head of Shorthorn females are maintained at the operation in the rolling hills just north of Creston. The Studer herd is known for its moderate-sized females. You would have to walk quite a few pastures at

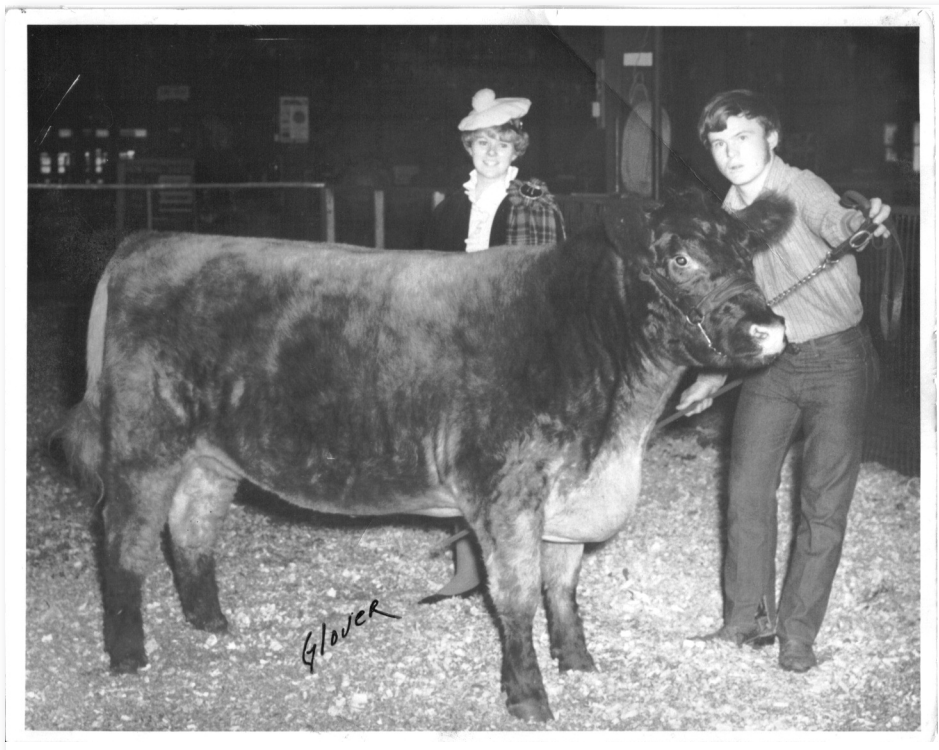
Studer's before you see one that is not. This uniformity comes from many years of selecting females for moderate size, easy keeping and functional females. The philosophy at Studer's is the cows need to work for the producer versus the producer working for them.

This selection process is based on visual appraisal plus many years of records. There are five major selection priorities at Studer Shorthorns including structural correctness, disposition, performance, birth weight and udder quality. Dale is the first to tell you that data is just one part of selection. "Raising females is an art, not just a science," says Studer. "Yes, the data is science, but we need to select cattle that are visually appealing and moderately sized and that is where the art comes into play." By combining the major selection priorities, Studer's have been able to raise the kind of cattle that work in the commercial herds and the purebred herds, the show ring and the pasture.

The sires

Performance data is an important factor in selecting a herd sire for Studer Shorthorns. National breed summary data is used and birth weight EPDs (expected progeny differences) and maternal EPDs are monitored very closely. Birth weight is a trait that has a major impact on the Studer operation as they continue to create more functional cattle for the commercial producer.

Both artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer work have accelerated the rate that the Studers can continue their genetic improvement. Currently, about 25 percent of the herd is AI bred in addition to the replacement heifers. AI has allowed for new genetics to be introduced into the cow herd, plus, it allows for the selection of the very best calving ease Shorthorn sires to be used on heifers.



Dale is pictured with one of his first Shorthorn heifers purchased in 1968. She was champion at Kansas City, Minnesota State Fair and Sioux Falls in 1970.

The Studer name has been linked to many popular and time-tested Shorthorn sires including Leader 21st whose grandsire Priam Royal Leader was bred by Dale's grandfather, Ben. Studer's Pretender, Marquis, Studer's Prince James and most recently Studer's Jazz Man have all been involved in national genetic evaluation programs.

The marketing

Studer Shorthorns merchandise their seedstock through private treaty sales, an annual production sale and the Iowa Beef Expo. The cattle are designed to meet the criteria of diverse set of buyers.

Approximately 20 bulls are sold each year with about 75 percent going to commercial operations. These young bulls are hand-fed from start to finish on a ration of roughage, corn and protein that allows the bulls to develop at the right pace for optimal breeding soundness and work readiness. Prospective buyers have a wealth of information to use in making their selection decisions. All bulls have pedigree information, full EPD information and past genetic line performance.

In October, the Studer family has an annual production sale. Junior exhibitors have come to love the Shorthorn breed and this is one avenue that Studer's use to get kids started in the Shorthorn breed with excellent open females.

In February, you can find the Studer's at the Iowa Beef Expo exhibiting and selling their genetics. Their cattle have been breed champions and top-sellers numerous times.

Activities and awards

Dale has been active in the Shorthorn

breed at the state and national levels. He has served on the Iowa Shorthorn Association board, including serving as president and has been selected to represent Iowa as the delegate to the American Shorthorn Association for more than 20 years.

The Studer family has also received numerous awards for their cattle operation. Two of which Dale is most proud of include being selected as the Iowa Builder of the Breed from the Iowa Shorthorn Association in 2001, and as the National Builder of the Breed from the American Shorthorn Association in 2000. However, Dale is quick to add that the greatest award is still being able to see your genetics work for others.

The show and sale ring is a family affair. The Studers work together to exhibit and market their cattle with no hired help. Nate leads the fitting and everyone pitches in to get the job done. Sarah recently exhibited the champion cow-calf pair at the 2008 Shorthorn Junior Nationals in Kansas City and Austin had two division winners at the 2006 nationals in Des Moines.

The family

Family is a big part of Studer Shorthorns. Dale's wife, Anita, has been the matriarch of the Studer family, sharing a love of the breed and working alongside Dale to develop the operation. Dale and Anita have been married for 29 years and have been blessed with five children: Nate, Kaisha, Ashley, Austin and Sarah.

Nate has served three terms as President of the Iowa Shorthorn board - the fourth generation of Studers to do so. He and his wife, Jenny, are serious about continuing the Studer



Nate, Kaisha, Ashley, Austin and Sarah take a moment to reflect on their show ring success with their Shorthorn cattle.

tradition. Kaisha, known for keeping everything going behind the scenes and lending a helping hand in the operation, is employed by Iowa Health Systems in Des Moines. She and Sarah's medical interest come from Anita's 30 years of work as nurse. Ashley grew up with a love for the cattle and being in the show ring. She holds a degree in Ag Studies from Iowa State and is employed by Hubbard Feeds. She and her husband, Chance, were recently married this fall. Their family runs a club calf operation, but there are a few Shorthorn cows in the pastures too.

Austin is currently a senior at Iowa State majoring in business. As he pursued opportunities in college, he found a new passion in the field of agronomy. Sarah, currently a sophomore at Des Moines Area Community College, is pursuing a degree in the medical field. She has been actively involved in showing cattle, FFA and sports.

Dale's five brothers have been active cattlemen as well. Wayne raises Angus cattle at the home place of Studer Stock Farm in Wesley. Rich was Dale's first partner in the Shorthorn business until his passing in 1989. Mike lives in Wesley and is currently a partner with Dale in the Shorthorns. Craig has been involved in the Simmental business. He resides in Wesley and was in partnership with brother, Tom, until his passing 10 years ago.

As the Studer family continues to grow and pursue their careers, their paths may take them different ways, but wherever they travel, their deep roots in agriculture and the Shorthorn breed will remain strong.



Sarah is pictured with her champion cow-calf pair at the Shorthorn Junior Nationals in Kansas City.