

# Committed to QUALITY

By Kindra Gordon

“We talk cattle seven days a week and are looking at cattle all the time,” says Joshua Mohnen as he talks about his family’s quest in raising superior Angus cattle on their family operation near White Lake in south-central South Dakota.

It’s a lifestyle he loves. Thirty-eight-year-old Mohnen notes, “I was born with Angus cattle. It’s been the only thing I’ve known.” Today, he enjoys the opportunity to work with his family – parents Steve and Kathy, wife Katie and four young sons, and brother John and his wife Tory and their two young children – in continuing the Angus journey his parents initiated in the 1980s.

At that time, Steve worked for Bon View Farms, a revered Angus operation based in South Dakota. After five years in that role, in 1986 Steve and Kathy transitioned to working with Steve’s father and building their own Angus herd with Bon View genetics and marketing cattle private treaty. In 1994, they purchased their own farm from family relative Cletus Mohnen, and held their first production sale that year.

It was an upbringing that influenced young Mohnen greatly, and today he reflects with appreciation on the opportunities he was afforded to learn the Angus breed from his parents who are his role models. Others who instilled Mohnen’s love for cattle include Bon View Farms owners Howard and JoAnne Hillman.

By 2000, one of Joshua Mohnen’s favorite accomplishments occurred. He recalls working the phone to sell bulls while attending college. He placed a call to ABS, and as a result, Mohnen Modern Design, an 878 son, was purchased by the genetics company through the Mohnen bull sale and was the family’s first sire that went into an A.I. stud. Over the years, more than a dozen other bulls bred and raised by Mohnens have gone into bull studs.

Mohnen says another memorable accomplishment was achieved at the National

Western Stock Show in 2015 when Mohnen Angus earned champion carload honors. “I feel the most impressive thing about that was that six of those ten bulls were sired by Mohnen South Dakota 402, which showed our program was competitive at the national level,” Mohnen says.

Their success over the years has fueled a desire to continue improving. “We continue trying to make our cowherd better than the year before,” Mohnen says. To that end, they utilize embryo transfer (E.T.) and A.I. extensively to maximize elite genetics in their herd. They calve 150 to 175 recip cows in December, and calve another 400 A.I.-bred cows in January and February.

The Mohnens have expanded from their annual production sale held annually at the farm on the second Thursday in February, to also offer a spring turn-out sale in May and a female sale in late September to early October.

Each step of their Angus program is truly a family endeavor, notes Mohnen. While he, his dad and brother own cattle separately, they run the cattle together and manage together. Daily work is shared by the trio, with occasional help from hired labor, while Kathy and Katie do much of the record-keeping, bookwork and yard cleaning.

Looking ahead, Mohnen intends to keep pursuing genetic improvement and raising cattle that work for their customers. He notes that feet and leg issues are an area that he believes the breed must continue addressing, and he feels the industry must continue to balance selection choices based on actual performance and phenotype. “Data is always a good tool, but you still have to look at the cattle and the power behind them,” he says.

Thus, his advice to others, especially young producers starting in the beef business is this: “Stick to the basics. Build a maternal cowherd. Don’t chase fads. Get out and see the animals.”

All total, Mohnen says his goal is not about selling quantity, but quality. He notes, “I take pride in offering our customers quality from top to bottom.” To that he shares, “My parents always had the motto ‘There’s power in the genetics.’ I’ve added to that and say, ‘Raising quality is not our job, it’s our life.’” In future years, Mohnen says he is interested in serving the Angus breed on their national board, and one day running for President of the American Angus Association. He notes, “I take pride in our breed and want to keep the Angus breed strong.”

He looks forward to passing that quality commitment on to the next generation of Mohnen’s, and says of his sons, “Every time they are out there helping, it makes me smile... I’m excited for the future, my goal is for my sons to sell to our customers or their kids someday.”



Joshua Mohnen

- 38-years-old
- White Lake, SD
- Co-owns and operates Mohnen Angus

**Education:** Attended Mitchell Technical Institute for Agriculture Technology

**Background:** Mohnen Angus is a family operation, started by Joshua’s parents Steve and Kathy in 1986. Today, they and two of their four children, Joshua and John and their young families, work together in raising and marketing Angus cattle. Brother Jared operates an ag insurance business in Mitchell; sister Jennifer lives in Sundance, Wyo. with her family.

**Family:** Wife Katie and four sons, Koye, 10; Kade, 8, Kase, 5; and Kole, 2.

**Industry Involvement:** Mohnen is active with the South Dakota Angus Association and is currently in his second year as president. Prior to that, he served three years on the South Dakota Angus board of directors. He also annually attends the national Angus Convention.

**Hobbies:** Similar to his own upbringing, Mohnen has enjoyed getting involved in 4-H with his oldest son who started showing two years ago; he also enjoys fishing and big game hunting.

**Motto:** “Raising quality is not our job, it’s our life.”

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