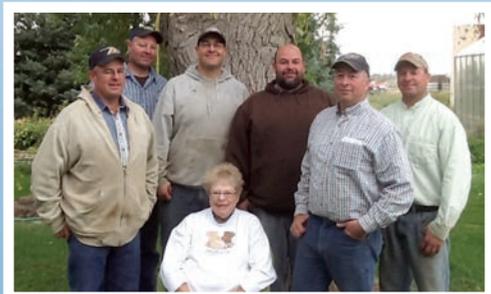


# Red Angus – Without a Doubt

by Kim Holt for *American Red Angus Magazine*, photos by Scott Holt

**“When I was a young kid, we tried every breed you can think of. But since we went to Red Angus, we’ve never looked back. The Red Angus is really a good breed,” assured commercial rancher Ryan Pancheri from Howe, Idaho. And, from his experiences with different breeds, he would know.**



The Pancheri brothers, pictured with their mother, Marylyn Pancheri, include (L to R) Ryan, Rod, Romero, Roman, Rick and Rory. (Photo by Barbara Pancheri)

Pancheris' first-calf heifers don't initially go out on dry lands but, instead, graze sub-irrigated pastures where they're able to forage and breed up well.



Ryan, his wife Barbara and their four children, along with five of Ryan's brothers – Rick, Rod, Romero, Roman and Rory – and their families run 2,500 Red Angus commercials with their mother, Marylyn, affectionately described by Ryan as the "glue" that holds their family of eight total siblings together.

The brothers are the third generation to operate in the Little Lost River Valley in southeast Idaho's Butte County, some 65 miles west of Idaho Falls, Idaho, and 250 miles north of Salt Lake City, Utah.

When it comes to cattle, Ryan and his family members are sold on the fertility, mothering ability and great dispositions of Red Angus. They also appreciate the way these females fit their environment.

"They adapt very well to wherever we put them – from irrigated grass to



The quiet disposition of the Red Angus cattle is of utmost importance to Ryan, especially when the family relies on the next generation, including Madison (11), to handle cattle.

sparse grass on desert and mountain range. They always bring in a big, healthy calf in the fall," said Pancheri.

Marked only with a post office, Howe is located at an elevation of nearly

5,000 feet. It's near here where the Pancheris run their mature cows on high-desert, mountainous country on both Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grazing allotments and private grazing lands.



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This dry country usually receives less than 5 inches of rainfall per year. The Pancheris are one of the largest public lands grazers in their area, with BLM lands covered in sagebrush, crested wheat and native grasses.

“It is great cow-calf country,” Pancheri explained, “but not the best for yearlings.” And that’s why they run their replacement heifers on irrigated pasture under some of the 70 to 75 pivots on the expansive Pancheri operation comprised of wheat and alfalfa cropland and grazing lands.

Meanwhile, they allow their first-calf heifers a chance to further grow and breed up on sub-irrigated pastures, a management practice that has proven successful.

### Sold on Red

Pancheri said that his family had to run the gamut with different breeds before they discovered success by using Red Angus, initially incorporating them through sire genetics.

Their feeder-calf buyer, the late Ward Johnson, recommended the breed to the family who, by then, had already experienced Black Angus and Charolais cattle, along with Longhorns and Salers.



A large user of public grazing lands, the Pancheris run 1,500 pairs on BLM allotments five to six months of the year.



The Pancheris run their cattle on grazing lands below Mt. Borah, the tallest mountain peak in Idaho, at more than 12,000 feet in elevation.

The Pancheris initially started with a purchase of 10 Red Angus bulls. Pancheri was concerned with their birth weights, but “Dad wasn’t the guy who believed in birth weights or EPDs for that matter.”

They turned out these bulls with white, black and a few red heifers before Pancheri received the paperwork confirming that three of the bulls had recorded birth weights greater than 100 pounds. He wasn’t impressed and feared the worse – calving issues ... again.

The story had a happy ending, however. “We never pulled a calf that year and that’s what sold us on Red Angus,” said Pancheri.

He continued that Red Angus are the most maternal breed they’ve raised, from mothering ability to breed up. “They’re just a lot more fertile cattle than other breeds.”

Pancheri said they do watch birth weights, moderating them for heifers. However, very few of their 500 to 600 head of heifers need assistance at calving. They might check their heifers at calving, but don’t night check the mature cows – a definite credit to the comfort level this breed supplies from a calving-ease standpoint.

The Pancheris have also been pleased with the Red Angus bulls from breeding ability to growth, longevity and disposition. “They are easy to be around,” Pancheri stated.

Disposition is a big deal on this ranch, because “when the kids are out of school, they’re helping us. We rely on their help a lot, and it’s a lot better for us to have cattle that anybody can work than cattle with which you have to watch yourself.”

At least 15 Pancheri children are able to pitch in right now to get the work done,

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the oldest at 22. Pancheri added, “My dad always said he had the best workforce around; he had all of us kids and didn’t have to hire many hired men.”

He adds that they’ve found the Red Angus bulls to also be easier on facilities. Idaho is a mandatory trich testing state, and Pancheri likes the fact that these red bulls don’t tear up the corrals, as had their black and white predecessors. Plus, “my kids get right in and help us.”

### Bred Up for Success

From their initial success with Red Angus bulls, the Pancheris started building a their cowherd over the course of a number of years. They purchased replacements from the former Kemp herd and eastern Idaho’s Loosli Red Angus. When Kemp herd, they bought 4-, 5- and 6-year-old cows.

“We notched the ears of all the pure-bred and registered cattle we bought, and from that point on, we’ve kept all of the heifer calves from those cattle. That’s how we’ve grown our herd to 2,500 head. We haven’t bought any females for 10 to 15 years.”

Pancheri added, “We got a great market now – our heifer calves will bring more than our steer calves nowadays.” They’ve also been told their heifers are some of the best in the country for the size of their herd.

“We have lots of demand for our bred heifers. I could sell them really easily but until we get all our cows preg checked, I prefer to not sell anything.”

### Heading in the Right Direction

Pancheri believes their bull suppliers are providing them with high-quality Red Angus genetics. He said their primary supplier has been good to work with through the years, always interested in the needs of his commercial customer and concerned with what



Heifer calves that aren’t retained in the Pancheri herd are marketed and often bring more than their steer mates.

happens on the carcass side of the business.

With Rick’s help, Ryan oversees the bull buying for their herd, keeping track of genetics and selection factors. They are mindful of birth weights but also pay attention to carcass traits. Pancheri said they also really watch maternal because “you’ve got to have a cow produce a calf before you can have a carcass.”

For 18 years, the Pancheris have been successfully bull breeding their replacement heifers for 45 days in their feedlot. Pancheri explained that they’ll turn four to six bulls in with a group of 100, and any heifers that don’t breed up in that time frame are sold in the fall.

The heifers start calving in February, one month ahead of the mature cows, which calve for 60 days beginning March 1, when temperatures can be as high as 48 degrees Fahrenheit and as low as 23 degrees Fahrenheit.

Mother Nature dictates much of the feeding requirements and it isn’t unheard of for them to need to feed hay in the winter for up to 120 days. “It depends on how long the cows can for-

age,” Pancheri explained. “A heavy snowfall or an open winter are factors on the feeding timeline.”

Branding begins April 1 and, starting with heifers, Pancheri said they’ll work a herd every week thereafter, slowly making their way up the valley. Their mature cattle are turned onto BLM range May 1 where they are bred. They spend summers on dry grazing lands, and are only brought onto irrigated pasture for a month in early September before weaning in order to add additional weight on calves. Last year, calves weaned off at 579 pounds, which Pancheri said is really good for their country.

They start weaning October 1 with 300 to 500 head of pairs separated weekly for four weeks. The calves are trucked to their feedlot in Howe, while the cows are preg checked and turned back out onto rangelands to forage until the weather dictates otherwise.

Since 2006, the family has enrolled calves in the Red Angus Feeder Calf Certification Program (FCCP), tagging their calves with the familiar yellow tag as another means to capture additional value.

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Pancheri explained, “We thought it would give us another avenue that, if we wanted to market them, people would know that they’re the Red Angus.” He said they haven’t gotten the opportunity to test the tag because the Johnson brothers have placed the top bid on their cattle each year.

Gary and Robert Johnson, twin brothers, own and operate Johnson Livestock near Idaho Falls, a finishing feedlot they started in 1984 with their late father, Ward, who suggested Red Angus to the Pancheris.

The Johnsons have purchased Pancheri cattle for 30 years, and this relationship extends back another 40. Explaining why, Robert Johnson remarked, “They have been really good, honest people to work with. We’ve developed a good relationship over the years. They’ve always produced quality livestock and always been as honest as can be when we’ve dealt with them.”

Though the Johnsons feed all breeds of cattle, he said, “Performance-wise, I would fill our feedlot with Pancheri cattle if there were enough of them.”

“The uniformity now, compared to 25 years ago, is unbelievable. They’ve done a really good job the last 10 to 12 years of picking the right type of fe-

males to put back in their herd. Obviously they’re picking sires that produce uniform calves.”

The Pancheri steers are harvested at JBS in Hyrum, Utah, at about 18 to 22 months of age. Johnson said the front end of the Pancheri cattle have probably been the best of all they’ve harvested in 2014.

The first five loads, all harvested on one day, quality graded 95 percent Choice with just under 10 percent Prime. For their feedlot, the Johnsons usually average a 63 percent yield, but with the Pancheri cattle, they’ll usually see an additional half percent.

“Between the quality of their cattle and type of people they are to deal with, they’re pretty tough to beat,” Johnson assured. He added that the cattle are also healthy and winter hardy. From the example these cattle have set, he said, “We’d absolutely feed more good Red Angus if we could get them.” The Johnsons share feed and performance data with their cow-calf customers.

“They tell us if we are going in the right direction with our cattle or not,” Pancheri said, “and we are still in the business.”



Ryan Pancheri keeps weaning weight records and last year their calves weaned off at 579 pounds.



All heifers are calved near Howe, but three other herds are scattered into their upper valley, as far as 30 miles apart.

He added, “Everybody keeps telling us we should start crossbreeding. I asked the Johnsons if we needed to change our program and they asked me, ‘Why do you want to change something that is as good as it is?’ So, we’ll keep going the way we’re going.”

Actually, Pancheri and his brothers have no desire to crossbreed. They have had a higher percent calf crop and their calves are heavier than they’ve ever been. He said when you look down the feedlot bunks, the cattle look like peas in a pod.

“There’s enough here to keep our family busy and, some days, there is too much. We have a good work force, and working together with six of us brothers, our kids and wives, we do a good job. As long as we can continue to make a living and pay the bills, we’re doing alright. The Red Angus have helped us as much as anything.”

“There’s no reason to fix something that is working,” he summarized, “and Red Angus are working for us beyond a shadow of a doubt.” ■