

# A Closer Look at INDRELAND ANGUS

## LOCATION

Indreland Ranch is located 12 miles north of Big Timber, Montana which is about 60 miles east of Bozeman and 80 miles west of Billings.

## LONGEVITY

Indreland Angus originated in 1977. That makes 44 years in the registered Angus business.

## HISTORY

Roger's grandfather, Arch Ginther, was one of the founders of the Montana Angus Association. At one time, they held a joint sale with N Bar. After his untimely death, the family continued to raise purebred Angus cattle but chose not to be registered. Roger's mom, Marjorie Ginther Indreland, and his aunt, Betty Ginther Teig, were the inspiration for Roger to start his own registered Angus herd. It started as a high school FFA project in 1977 with a purchase of 13 bred females from Gauger Angus of Joliet, MT. In the early 1980s, Roger added a few Leachman bred females from Cottontail Ranch of Melville, MT. During college at MSU, Roger worked for Jay Leachman in Bozeman. Jay was also very inspirational to Roger's pursuit in the Angus business. Roger graduated from MSU in 1985 with a degree in Farm & Ranch Management.

Roger continued his herd although he pursued other endeavors such as golf course construction and renovation with Roe Construction of Big Timber. This is where he and his wife, Betsy Roe Indreland, got to know each other and were married in 1986. Betsy completed her Business Marketing degree at MSU in 1987 after which they both continued to work for her family's construction company.

In the 1990's, Roger and Betsy leased the ranch from Roger's parents and then purchased it in 2006. Since then, they have been running their ranch business full time.

In the early days, calving took place in February/March, a lot of hay was fed, and they marketed yearling bulls. The philosophy of "bigger, better, faster, more" was followed as they tried to keep up with the latest trends. They found that it was not economically feasible and certainly did not cash flow.

In 2012, after about 10 years of telling themselves that they couldn't afford to go, they attended a Ranching for Profit school. This was definitely a game changer. After shifting their paradigms, they changed some things to help the profitability of their ranch. One of the big changes was moving their calving date to May/June. Doing this, they are able to graze their main cowherd all year in most years. Of course, there continues to be a haypile as insurance for "one of those winters". They do feed high protein hay to supplement the cow's diet if forage conditions are less than ideal. As Burke Teichert would say, "Right amount, right time".

After changing their calving date, they also switched from marketing yearling bulls to 18 month old bulls. This allowed them to develop the bulls slower and on forage. They have an annual bull sale in December. This year the sale is December 6th. Another game changer is that with the development of DNA to determine parentage, they are able to multi-sire breed their females. Fewer herds to manage is beneficial in their grazing plans and a competitive breeding environment helps to discover prolific breeders. For example, they have identified one current herd sire, Indreland EXT 4666, that sired 71 calves in 2021, 69 calves in 2020, and 77 calves in 2019. They do introduce outside genetics through AI on a limited basis, but predominantly have kept sons out of cows they revere.

Roger wholeheartedly agrees with this excerpt from a



BEEF magazine article by Burke Teichert titled “Where do I get the right bulls for my maternal cowherd?” Burke says, “I am reminded of a statement heard many years ago – “We need to quit telling our cattle what to look like and, instead, tell them what we want them to do and then let them look the way they need to look in order to do what we want them to do.” Remember, we can’t ask them to do more than the environment will provide for and allow.” Roger adds, “Anything beyond that will add to the cost of production.”



#### CURRENT OPERATIONS

Indreland Angus’ production philosophy is that cows must consistently excel at converting their basic grass resource to beef. Their operation is forage based, with an emphasis on minimizing the amount of feed that is carried to their cattle. To do this, they utilize adaptive cell grazing techniques with an emphasis on stockpiling forage for winter and as a buffer for drought.

Another game changer was when they met Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils in 2013. She is an Agroecologist from New Zealand that was presenting at a Ranching for Profit alumni event. The concept of soil health was something that they had not thought much about until then. Through her guidance, they have implemented strategies to improve the health of their soil, increase the diversity of plant species and increase the water holding capacity of their soil. The major thing is the grazing of the cattle allowing adequate rest for areas grazed and to eliminate overgrazing – taking a second bite of a plant that is regrowing. Indrelands feel that they have increased their forage capacity by at least 50% with these grazing practices. Their main focus is on growing grass with an eye on ecological health and systems thinking. They think in terms of pounds per acre versus pounds per animal.

Indreland Ranch has hired a Board of Advisors that is made up of Nicole Masters of Integrity Soils, Katie Rein Loose DVM (their vet), Burke Teichert and Dave Pratt (Ranch

Management Consultants former owner). They meet 2 – 3 times per year for a ranch and cattle tour followed by meetings to analyze their business with the result of an action plan with a timeline of tasks that will help the business be more successful.

Indrelands are also part of a pilot project of carbon sequestration on grasslands that pays them for grazing practices that promote building organic matter (thus carbon) in their soil. They also hold soil health workshops on their ranch often.

#### THE INDRELAND FAMILY

Roger and Betsy have two daughters, Anne (28) and Kate (23). Growing up, both girls were active in 4-H, FFA and MT Junior Angus. Although they both still own cows in the herd, they are pursuing other things off the ranch right now. Anne, Schyler, and their son, Brooks (7) are in Texas working in the cutting horse industry. Kate is a senior at the University of Montana and is in the Army ROTC program. Roger and Betsy feel strongly that children need to work off the ranch for a few years before thinking about returning to work in the ranch business. Roger and Betsy want to provide an opportunity for their daughters to be part of the seedstock business or other ranch related enterprises, but realize they have other opportunities as well.

Currently labor roles on the ranch are filled by apprentices, specifically through Quivira’s New Agrarian Program. This program pairs young people that want to learn and be involved with agriculture with ranches doing regenerative practices to serve as mentors.

#### GENETICS

The mission of Indreland Angus is to “provide genetics and services that help cattle producers attain more freedom and profitability in business and life”. Freedom meaning producing cattle that don’t require a lot of attention ie – calve on their own. Profitability refers to lower inputs that saves producers money.

The genetics that Indreland Angus focus on are cattle that are very adaptable and respond well to being challenged. Those challenges include poor quality forage, the ability to get through winter, and calving unassisted. Their cows and heifers calve on the range with no night checks. This calving season, they did not have one heifer or cow in the chute for a calving issue.

One number they look at a lot is the \$EN. The American Angus Association definition of \$EN (cow energy value) is “expressed in dollar savings per cow per year, assesses differences in cow energy requirements as an expected dollar savings difference in daughters of sires. A larger value is more favorable when comparing two animals (more dollars saved on feed energy expenses). Components for





computing the cow \$EN savings difference include lactation energy requirements and energy costs associated with the differences in mature cow size." According to the Fall 2021 Sire Evaluation Report, the average \$EN for current sires is -14 and -10 for current dams. Indreland current dams average +14.87 (top 3%) and their sale bulls average +15.58 (top 2% for

non-parent bulls).

Indrelands strive to produce cattle that require low inputs thinking of how that economically affects the commercial cow/calf producer.

**FUTURE PLANS**

Roger and Betsy have an official vision statement, "Indreland Ranch is holistically managed and operated to produce healthy nutrition and environment for people, livestock and wildlife. This is accomplished by resilience to economic and environmental factors and by providing opportunities and profit to all involved. It is managed and operated by a team of motivated, goal oriented and open-minded individuals that work together in a respectful manner." They admit they are not there yet, but it is a daily inspiration on the path forward. They hope to provide opportunities in agriculture for their daughters and to others that are interested in regenerative agriculture.

**MAA INVOLVEMENT**

Roger and Betsy got involved with the Montana Angus Association in the early 1990's when the MT Angus Tour was in the Midland Empire area. Roger has been President of the Midland Empire Angus and recently on the Montana Angus board. Betsy has been involved in the Montana Angus Auxiliary including running the "Country Store" and holding other positions including President.

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