



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Judy Loonan of Loonan Stock Farm Named 2017 Iowa Seedstock Producer of the Year

Judy Loonan of Loonan Stock Farm, Corning, Iowa, has been named as Iowa's Seedstock Producer of the Year. The coveted award, sponsored annually by the Iowa Beef Breeds Council, is being awarded to Judy Loonan on Monday, February 13, 2017 at the Expo Kick-Off Program; which is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Bull Pen of the cattle barn at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. All friends of the Loonan family and the Iowa Beef Expo are invited to attend.

The Seedstock Producer of the Year is a coveted award among Iowa's Purebred breeders. The purpose of the award is to honor outstanding cattle producers in the seedstock industry. Each Purebred Breed Association is given the opportunity to nominate one candidate for the award. Applications are reviewed by a Seedstock Committee, which gives careful consideration to producers programs in their entirety, including record keeping, industry participation and leadership, merchandising programs, selection criteria and herd improvement over time.

Judy Loonan has been in the Seedstock cattle business for 42 years raising Red Angus, Simmental and Red Simangus cattle currently running 400 cows. Performance records have also been kept for 42 years and Loonan Stock Farm has been members of the Red Angus and Simmental Associations. Loonan Stock Farm sells an average of 135-140 bulls each year Private Treaty providing their customers with birthweight, weaning weight, gain periods, EPD's, carcass data and frame score just to name a few.

Judy Loonan helped to get the Adams County Cattlemen going again and has served on their committee. She feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to write for a year for the Farm Bureau Family Living Magazine. Many of you have seen Judy for many years as she has clerked the 4-H Beef Show at the Iowa State Fair for over 30 years. Judy has also served on the FSA Board for over 18 years. For her efforts Judy has been recognized as the 2004 Agriculturalist of the year in Corning, 2006 Adams County Cattlemen of the Year and an honorary member of the Corning FFA.

In her own words here is a brief historical review of his seedstock operation:

Loonan Stock Farm was started back in my grandfather's day and the original farm is now a century farm. We became a seedstock breeder 42 years ago when we were looking for a way to produce more pounds by genetics. Simmental were the up and coming breed. Our original base cows were Hereford Holstein and Angus Holstein heifers we purchased from Wisconsin and those crossed with a Simmental bull really produced some extra pounds. Our first calf crop of ½ Simmental calves increased our weaning weights from 435# to 617# for a difference of 182# with no creep feed.

To merchandise our calves we started having Production Sales at the sale barn in Corning. We had 49 head offered in the first sale. It then progressed from these sales to Private Treaty Opening Day – 1st come 1st pick. This method ended when some of our customers said they would like a chance at any of the bulls and would be willing to pay more to have that chance which is the method we use to this day. The cattle all have a base price in the catalog and when people come they sign in and we go by the order they signed in and they can call in whatever animal they are interested in but anyone can bid. There is no actual auctioneering so it is very laid back and quiet. The drawback to this method is that we can't sell over video because we have no sale order.

The Simmentals were working great but dad could see that we would need to introduce another breed because our customers wanted to know where they go from here to keep on improving their calf crop. In 1989 we introduced Red Angus after looking at several other breeds and it was the right decision. There wasn't the time to breed up to the Pure Bred level in the Red Angus so we went to different breeders and bought what we felt were their best heifers and started our herd. A goal with adding the Red Angus was calving ease and also carcass plus we try for moderate sized animals with uniformity thought-out. The weight of our cows with calves on the sale are posted in the sale catalog and we remind customers that our cows are fed well plus they carry a lot of natural thickness and that all shows up in their weights.

A great help was that in 1993 we started ultrasounding both our bull calves and heifer calves for carcass quality. The bulls have been ultrasounded ever since for 23 years and we did the heifers for only a couple of years. This practice has proved beneficial for us as there have been many carcass winners using our genetics and having the kind of customers

who know how to maximize the genetics they are purchasing. It's a great feeling when we get calls with how well their cattle have performed. The Red Angus has given us many carcass winners along with our Simmental. We consider ourselves Purebred breeders for the commercial producers.

When 1996 rolled around we were very fortunate to find Rick Thompson. He came from Nebraska where he was auctioneering and feeding cattle. He became our herdsman in November of that year. All three of us have areas we excel in but we also worked so well together. There was many a day we all three sat around the kitchen table going over sale catalogs looking for new genetics or making decisions on our own sale or just getting crops figured out. He now has a herd of his own here and is the one who delivers the bulls in the spring. Delivering was one of dad's favorite times of the year because he got to talk to our customers and find out what we need to keep the same or what they are looking for next 2011 was a sad year when he passed away. That now falls on Rick and he has taken up the challenge well.

We now have over 270 Red Angus cows and run a calving ease line and some cows that are a true performance line. What really sold us on the Red Angus breed was the uniformity in their calves. There were a lot of Continental bred females and there was not a lot of uniformity in their calves. By using Red Angus for only one generation it did away with the inconsistent calves and made them uniform at weaning and beyond. In our herd what we look for is bred alike EPD's which we feel contributes a lot to the uniformity of calf crops because we aren't breeding opposites to come up with the end product. Our sales now consist of selling around 100 Purebred Red Angus bulls, 25-30 Simmental bulls and 10-15 Red Angus x Simmental bulls. The heifers are 55-60 Purebred Red Angus heifers, 10-15 Simmental heifers and 15-20 Red Angus x Simmental heifers. Every year we sell out and at times could use a few more to sell. We are so very proud of the fact that our neighbors buy from us and that most of our bulls are sold here in Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri.

Our goals are to continue as we are by adding better genetics but keeping our same philosophy of consistent, dependable genetics. I would like to see us do more with some genetic testing but the biggest is to be a reliable source for the commercial producer to purchase their breeding stock.

There wouldn't be a Loonan Stock Farm seedstock provider if not for dad's insight into the future and when I came into the business in 1976 as a partner it was one of the best days of my life. What I learned from him is becoming more apparent every day after his passing and with Rick's knowledge and help we are able to continue plus we are so fortunate to have the customer base we have to keep us on the right track.

This is what Rick and I love to do and the long hours during calving are worth it when each live calf is weaned in the fall. To me this is an occupation and not a job and I know we are blessed to be able to wake up each day and do what we love to do. Rick's family has been great to work with and his wife becomes a widow during calving. When asked where my husband and kids are all I have to say is out in the pasture as I chose cattle over the normal family. I'm very fortunate that my sister lets me "borrow" her four at times and her grand kids. That's having your cake and eating it too.