

# Britt Family Farms

By: Sharon Rogers

The Britt name is synonymous with agriculture in Duplin and the surrounding counties in eastern North Carolina. Until recently the Britt family and farming were identified by their swine, poultry and row crop enterprises but over the last few years beef cattle have taken a more prominent position on the farming enterprise list thanks to the newest generation to farm the land.



James Ralph Britt, III is the most current family member to return to the farm to work alongside his father Ralph Britt, Jr. I had the pleasure of spending a day with James to learn more about the farm and his emerging interest in the purebred Angus business. For as long as he can remember he has been active on the farm. After high school, James began his college career at Lenoir Community College on a baseball scholarship. He knew he wanted to return to the farm so the next step in his education was to attend North Carolina State University where he graduated in 2017 from the Ag Institute with his Ag Business Management degree. I could tell this degree is serving him well because much of our conversation included discussions on the financial and marketing side of his Angus business. I asked James why he was interested in having cattle and in particular a herd of purebred cattle. He told me he has always had a strong interest in cattle and it was cultivated more during his time at NC State. To make cattle fit into the farming system and give James a deeper investment in the operation his father suggested having purebred cattle. This way he would be more involved due to the higher level of management needed for the registered herd. James has taken this very seriously and knows his costs, pedigrees and so much more about his operation. Being part of the younger generation, he has also embraced new technologies to help him with the management. For example, we were discussing some of the cattle and he quickly pulled up the AAA Angus mobile app from his smart phone to give me more details on his herd.

James may have only had registered Angus cattle for three years but he has totally immersed himself into everything Angus. The purebred Angus herd was started with the purchase of high quality females from select breeders across the southeast. James initially purchased a group of open heifers from Yon Family Farms and they have served as his foundation females. He similarly found other cattle in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia to add to his herd. He has also had success utilizing bulls from the Yon program

as well. He purchased his herd sire, Yon High Cotton D885, in the 2017 fall sale and is very impressed with the calves and how they perform in the eastern NC environment. I had the opportunity to see High Cotton during my visit to the farm and was very impressed with his tremendous length, thickness, slick hair, good



feet and great disposition. High Cotton also has the genetics to back up his good looks, being in the top 10-15% of the breed for all the Angus \$Value Indexes. This bull was a true investment in the future of the Britt herd and he is used to breed all the registered females after A.I. James is currently making plans to collect semen from High Cotton later this year. In addition the farm has a nice group of Yon Final Answer W494 sons, half-brothers to

High Cotton, which they use in the commercial cow herd. In 2019 James had his first set of calves from heifers he developed on the farm. The calves are still only babies but he is pleased with the performance of the heifers and their calves so far. He really enjoys learning all the pedigrees and determining which ones work best.

My visit to the farm was in late November and James was getting ready to begin the estrous synchronization protocol for his registered females. He utilizes the 7-day CO-Synch+CIDR program with timed A.I. breeding. Dr. Harrison Dudley is his herd veterinarian and assist James with the A.I. process and his overall herd health program. James has eighty registered females to A.I. bred this year for fall calves. The A.I. bulls he plans to use include: Sitz Stellar 726D, ACC Ascension 7014, and Byergo Boomer 6351.

In addition to the cattle, James has developed a keen interest in the grazing plan for his herd. He told me they are a bit unique in the area because they are currently grazing cattle year round and only feeding a very limited amount of hay or baleage. Of course his predominant grass is Bermuda but he also has crabgrass and plants winter and summer annuals for grazing. The Britt's find the cattle to be complimentary to their row crop enterprises because they plant cover crop/annuals on their crop lands anyway. So it is a great fit to have the



cattle use them for grazing. James said his cows are in better body condition in the winter than in the summer because of the annuals. These forages also help him to wean heavier calves without needing creep feed. He has found the most success with rye, rye grass and oats for winter along with millet and sorghum sudan grass for summer. They own no hay equipment so any hay they feed is purchased. They do have a tube balelage wrapper for baling their excess annuals, which they have custom harvested. I was very impressed by all the lush forage and temporary fences I saw during my visit. He rotational grazes the cattle across the annuals so by the time he has grazed the whole field he can return the cattle to the first paddock to start the process all over again. James was recently interviewed and featured on a NC Forage and Grasslands Council video discussing his grazing system. You can find the video on YouTube, *My Favorite Forage: A Tale of Forage Diversity*.

James markets his steer calves and non-replacement female calves directly off the farm to an individual buyer. He has been retaining the best heifers for his herd. Until this year when consigned a few females to special sales hosted by the NC Angus Association and other breeders. James began marketing a few bulls through the NC BCIP Bull Test Stations in 2018 and this year he had the high average daily gain Angus bull on test at Butner. During the tour I saw a group of bulls he is marketing directly from the farm. They were very functional, well developed yearling bull that could work in any herd. James realizes establishing a reputation for himself and his cattle will take time but he is willing to put in the time needed. His most interesting quote of the interview was, “the two “F’s” are the most important”. He was referring to fertility and good feet being the best foundation for any herd. James is continuing to grow his cattle herd with both registered and commercial females. Both sets of cattle will be used to grow his inventory and to help maintain the forages needed for their other livestock enterprises.



James is also very active in his community and within the cattle industry. He currently serves as a board member for the NC Angus Association which is helping him acquire more awareness on the business of the association, expand his breed knowledge and it gives him a network of other breeders to engage. You can reach James Britt to learn more about Britt Family Farms and his Angus herd by calling 919-738-6331.