

DAVIS FAMILY

Acme, Alberta

Jay Davis has always believed in the Canadian cattle industry. He's believed in it enough to export purebred Angus cattle to Japan, Mexico, Russia, Scotland, and the United States.

He's also believed in it enough to start his own ARDA Farms bull sale back in 1997, with more than 200 buyers now attending the annual spring event and more than 80 Black Angus going under the gavel each year.

And now, as the industry rebounds, Jay's faith is finally being rewarded.

"I think the product has always rated with the best in the world," says Jay. "We just hung in there, and finally things have turned around."

For their perseverance, their ingenuity, and their dedication to both their business and their community, the Davis family has earned this year's nod from Kneehill County for a BMO Farm Family Award.

The Davis family was selected "for their strong sense of community in the Acme district, and their commitment to the livestock industry," says Bruce Sommerville, agricultural fieldman for Kneehill County.

"When the BSE crisis hit, Jay and his family were committed to the industry that had built the farm. And with perseverance, and good management, they survived this setback to the industry."

The Davis family history in the Acme area dates back to 1903, when sharecropper James Davis brought his family of 13 to central Alberta from Nebraska. His son Art took over the farm in 1942 and established the ARDA Farms name, with the acronym standing for A.R. Davis Angus. Art farmed with sons

Jay and Darcy for some time, and these days Jay carries on the ARDA Farms tradition.

Located six kilometres west of Acme, ARDA Farms currently consists of an 800-head purebred and commercial cattle operation, as well as a healthy grain farm, with 3,000 acres seeded annually to wheat, barley, and canola.

The Davis clan has grown seed stock for more than 60 years — and about a decade ago, Jay completed a family circle by purchasing his grandfather's original homestead.

Jay and wife Lenore have four kids of their own — sons Garrett and Jarrett, who are actively involved in the farm; son Cody, who's just finished his first year at Olds College; and

daughter Scarlett, who's headed off to nursing school. They've also raised Cody's friend Joby Bishop, now a welder in Crossfield, after his father passed away of cancer several years ago.

The Davis name is well known around Acme. Jay has twice served as the president of the local agricultural society, and served six years on the Alberta Angus Association.

Lenore volunteers at the Acme School and the Acme Curling Club, and helped plan the rebuilding of the Acme United Church after it was destroyed by fire. The family has also been involved extensively with the local 4-H Club.

In addition, Jay was a longtime volunteer for the Calgary Stampede as a member of a beef cattle judging committee.

"The family involvement is a big reward for me, with Garrett and Jarrett starting their own herd and Cody wanting to farm and ranch," says Jay.

"Some people call it child abuse," quips Jay with a chuckle, "but the boys seem to be keen on it."

