Hunt Family Brangus: Preserving a Family Legacy Through Faith, Stewardship and Brangus Cattle

On a North Georgia farm with roots stretching back more than 150 years, the Hunt family is building on generations of agriculture while developing Brangus cattle for today's commercial producer.

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On a September morning near Calhoun, Georgia, a group of young Brangus bulls gathers quietly in a green pasture. There is no pushing or commotion as Jamey Hunt walks among them. Several turn toward a visitor with curiosity, standing almost as though they know they are having their picture taken. Their disposition isn't an accident.

Neither is much of anything about the way the Hunt family raises cattle. For Michael Hunt and his three sons Jamey, Wesley and Seth, Hunt Family Brangus is the continuation of a family agricultural story stretching back generations. It is a story of cotton and cattle, changing agricultural practices, faith, family, stewardship and a determination to leave the land better than they found it.

"One reason we do it is for the legacy of the land," his son Jamey explains. "The land is in our family, and so we want to take good care of it. One of the ways of taking good care of it is to do good things with it."

Today, the family manages approximately 400 acres near Calhoun, with additional leased acreage used primarily for hay production. Their registered Brangus operation is built around producing functional cattle, particularly bulls that can go to work for commercial cattle producers throughout the Southeast.

But to understand Hunt Family Brangus today, you have to go back much further.

From Tennessee to Georgia

The Hunt family's North Georgia roots date to sometime between 1860 and 1870, when their ancestors moved south from Bradley County, Tennessee, following the Civil War. By the 1870 census, the family was living in the Sonoraville community of Gordon County.

Agriculture became central to the family.

Jamey remembers the stories of his great-grandfather, William Paul Hunt, who established a cotton gin and eventually accumulated thousands of acres of farmland scattered throughout the county. Some of the land was farmed by family members, while other acreage was worked by tenant and sharecropper farmers.
The cotton gin stood near the land the family continues farming today.
Over the generations, however, agriculture changed.

By the 1960s, the boll weevil and challenging economics had made cotton increasingly difficult to grow profitably. Years of row-crop production had also taken a toll on the area's heavy clay soils. Jamey remembers his father describing severe erosion in places across the farm. Like many North Georgia farm families of that era, the Hunts adapted.

Poultry production was expanding throughout the region, so the family built chicken houses. Former row-crop ground was fenced, and cattle became a larger part of the operation. Those early cattle were typical of many Southern herds at the time, a mixture that included genetics from family milk cows and other breeds. Then, in 1975, the Hunt family's cattle story took an important turn.

Discovering Brangus

Jamey was only three years old when his father became interested in a breed he had read about in an agricultural publication: Brangus. A composite breed combining Angus and Brahman genetics, Brangus cattle were developed to bring together desirable characteristics of both breeds, including the maternal and carcass traits associated with Angus and the heat tolerance, adaptability and parasite resistance associated with Brahman-influenced cattle.

For a Southern cattle producer, the combination made sense.

Jamey's father traveled to Missouri and purchased Brangus cattle from breeder Jesse Dowdy, bringing them home to Georgia. As far as the Hunt family knows, theirs was among the earliest Brangus herds established in North Georgia. That purchase in 1975 began a relationship with the breed that has now spanned more than half a century. His father raised bulls and primarily sold them directly from the farm. The family also participated occasionally in regional sales and became involved in 4-H and a limited amount of showing. But cattle breeding looked considerably different then.

Today's producers have access to extensive performance information, EPDs and sophisticated genetic tools. In those early years, much of cattle selection depended upon observation, experience and what a producer could learn from other cattlemen. Eventually, as Jamey, Wesley and Seth grew up, went to college and established careers of their own, the registered portion of the operation became less of a focus. The cattle, however, never disappeared. And neither did the brothers' connection to the farm.

Returning to Registered Brangus

Years later, Jamey and Wesley began thinking seriously about registered Brangus again. They purchased several registered females from nearby Salacoa Valley Farms and began gradually building the herd. A relationship with respected Brangus cattleman and reproductive specialist Dr. John Spitzer and his family became another important part of the Hunts' education. The family eventually leased cattle from the Spitzers under an arrangement in which the Hunts raised the cattle and shared the calf crop. They also added females from other established herds, including a group from Twin Oaks Brangus. With each addition, the Hunt Family Brangus herd grew. Then came a pivotal decision.

When Dr. Spitzer decided to relocate, the Hunts purchased the mature portion of his cow herd. Suddenly, what had been a steadily growing operation required the family to make a choice: either find someone else to develop and market their bulls or learn how to do it themselves. They chose to learn. That decision ultimately led Hunt Family Brangus to establish its own production sale. In February 2027, the family expects to hold its 11th annual sale.

The brothers have approached the business much as they approach farming itself: learn, evaluate, improve and remain focused on practices that work for their operation and their customers.

None of the brothers built their careers around full-time agriculture. Jamey and Wesley both entered ministry, following another important Hunt family tradition. Jamey serves as pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church, while Wesley serves at Bethesda Baptist Church and also owns a business called Calhoun Tool and Equipment Rental and Seth, too, owns a business called Georgia Flooring. Their father, now in his 70s, also continues serving as a pastor and remains one of the driving forces behind the farm and is the majority owner of Hunt Family Brangus.

Jamey describes him as the person willing to spend hours repairing a water line, feeding cattle or handling the countless jobs that keep an agricultural operation functioning. "He is the man that makes it happen," Jamey says.

Developing Bulls for the Real World

When the Hunts decided to develop their own bulls, nutrition became one of their most important considerations.

Their goal wasn't simply to make bulls gain as much weight as possible.
They wanted steady, responsible development that allowed genetics to express themselves while producing sound cattle capable of going to work.
That led the family to AgCentral and Purina.

The Hunts worked with AgCentral's Lee Underwood as they developed a nutritional program and ultimately incorporated Purina Accuration® into their bull-development system.

Their target has remained around 3.25 pounds of average daily gain.

"We're usually within a couple tenths of that," Jamey says. "Sometimes we'll be 3.3 or 3.4, and that's the average. You're going to have some all-stars and some others."

The bulls are developed largely on grass with access to a self-fed ration rather than being confined to a dry lot. For the Hunts, that matters. They want customers to see cattle that have developed in conditions more representative of the environments where they will ultimately work.

The system also supports another characteristic that is extremely important to the family: soundness.

Rather than pushing cattle simply to create an impressive sale-day appearance, the goal is to produce bulls capable of leaving Hunt Family Brangus and performing for cattle producers.

AgCentral continues to be an important partner in that process. The family works closely with AgCentral team members, including Michaela and Randy, to monitor nutrition, mineral needs, feed usage and changing products and technologies.

"Michaela is great about keeping in contact with us," Jamey says. "Several times a year she's on the farm, keeping an eye on the animals and making sure we're stocked up on minerals. She's good about telling us about new products, too."

That relationship extends beyond simply delivering feed. The Hunts value having people they can call with questions and a network of expertise available when they need it. "The level of customer service has been great," Jamey says.

It is the kind of partnership that fits the Hunt family's philosophy: relationships matter.

Disposition Matters

Walking through a group of Hunt Family Brangus bulls makes another priority readily apparent. The cattle are remarkably calm. That, too, is intentional. The family works cattle primarily on foot once they are in the handling facilities and does not rely on dogs to move them through the pens. With their father still actively working around the cattle at age 76, temperament is more than a convenience. It is a safety issue.

"We have to make sure that we have genetics and livestock-management techniques that promote docility because we don't want to be hurt," Jamey explains. "Our dad's 76 years old. We don't want him to get hurt, and we certainly don't want our customers to get hurt."

Any animal can have an individual personality, he acknowledges. When the family identifies one that requires additional caution, they make sure a prospective buyer knows. That transparency reflects a larger philosophy behind Hunt Family Brangus. They aren't simply trying to sell a bull. They want the bull to work for the person who takes him home.

Stewardship Beyond the Cattle

The family's interest in improvement isn't limited to genetics and nutrition. In recent years, the brothers have spent more time learning about soil health and regenerative agricultural practices. While Jamey is quick to say they don't follow every regenerative practice, the research has influenced the way they think about the farm. One example is hay production.

The family recognized that repeatedly harvesting hay from their own ground also meant continually removing nutrients from that soil. So instead, where practical, they graze land they own and harvest much of their hay from leased acreage. It has created an interesting opportunity as the surrounding community changes.

Like many areas of North Georgia, large farms are increasingly being divided into smaller tracts and rural homesites. Some landowners may have 10 acres and a horse or simply want their acreage maintained. The Hunts can help manage those properties by harvesting the forage for hay, creating a benefit for both parties while reducing the amount of nutrients removed from the Hunt family's permanent pastures.

It is another example of adapting an old agricultural operation to a changing landscape. "We've done a lot of reading on regenerative agriculture," Jamey says. "We don't practice all the practices, partly because we're new to the information." But the principle behind the learning is longstanding: take care of the land.

Building the Next Generation

That sense of responsibility is particularly important because the Hunts don't view the farm as something belonging only to their generation. Jamey has two sons. Wesley already has grandchildren. Another generation of Hunts is growing up with a connection to this same North Georgia land. Whether every member of that generation chooses agriculture remains to be seen. Jamey understands that each generation has to find its own path. What the brothers can do is make sure there is something worth carrying forward.

"The land is in our family, and so we want to take good care of it," Jamey says.

For Hunt Family Brangus, that means keeping the farm productive. It means learning new practices while respecting the knowledge passed down through generations. It means producing cattle that have value to another producer. And it means recognizing that agricultural land has to serve a purpose if families hope to preserve it.

Today, those goals come together in the Brangus cattle grazing the same North Georgia landscape where Hunt ancestors planted crops generations ago.

More Than a Production Sale

Each February, the family's work culminates in the Hunt Family Brangus production sale at the Calhoun Stockyard. The upcoming sale will be held on the last Saturday in February.

Hunt Family Brangus serves as host, with approximately 60 bulls marketed in their larger sales. Some are bred and owned by Hunt Family Brangus, while others come from customers and consignors. Importantly, the bulls offered through the sale are developed at the Hunt farm from weaning until sale time.

That allows the family to know how the animals have been managed and gives buyers a more consistent basis for evaluating them.

The bulls are generally around 14 to 16 months old by sale time.

The family also maintains mature herd sires and, on selected bulls, offers semen for producers interested in incorporating Hunt Family Brangus genetics into their own breeding programs.

But the annual sale is only one day in a process that has taken generations to build.

Long before those bulls arrive at the Calhoun Stockyard, there have been months of nutrition, pasture management, performance evaluation and daily observation.

Before that came years of genetic decisions. And before any of it came a family willing to stay connected to the land.

Faith, Family and a Farm With Purpose

Perhaps that is what distinguishes the Hunt Family Brangus story most. There isn't a single moment when the farm suddenly became what it is today. Instead, each generation adapted.

Cotton gave way to poultry and cattle. Commercial cattle eventually led the family back to registered Brangus. Traditional management has been supplemented with performance data, improved nutrition and new ideas about soil and forage management.

Through all of those changes, several things have remained remarkably consistent: faith, family, hard work and stewardship.

For Jamey, Wesley, Seth and their father, agriculture also exists alongside lives of service beyond the farm. Their commitment to ministry and their commitment to agriculture may appear to be two separate worlds, but in many ways they are rooted in similar values—caring for what has been entrusted to them and serving others well.
Back in the pasture, the young Brangus bulls eventually lose interest in their visitors and return to grazing.
In a few months, many will leave this farm and begin working in commercial herds across the region.
But behind every one of them will be a much longer story—a family that came from Tennessee to North Georgia more than 150 years ago, a great-grandfather's cotton gin, a father's decision to purchase Brangus cattle in 1975, three brothers determined to keep learning, and generations of Hunts committed to keeping their family's agricultural legacy alive.

The cattle may be the product Hunt Family Brangus sells.

The land, however, is what they are working to preserve.

And after generations of change, that may be the Hunt family's most important crop of all.



