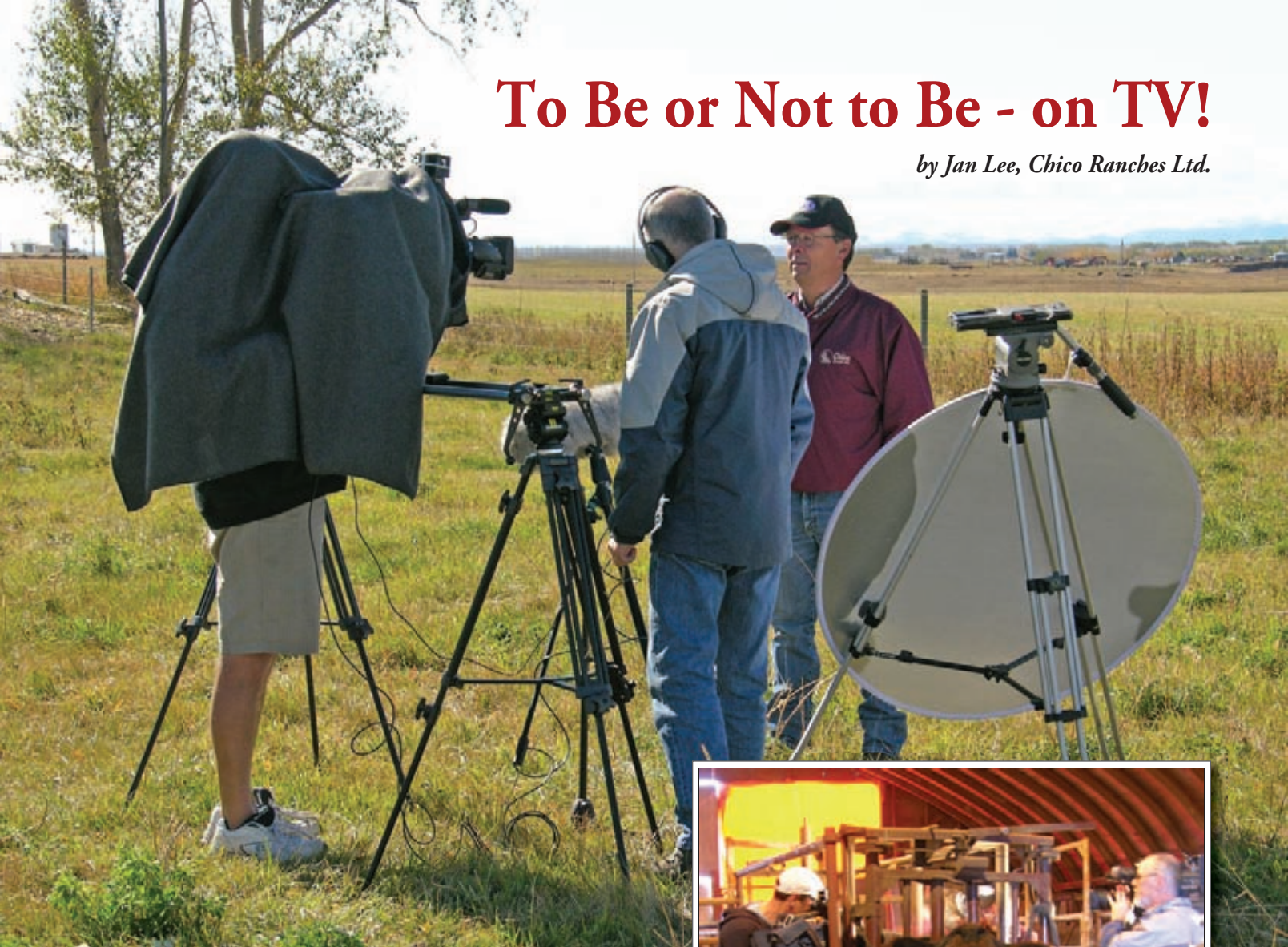


# To Be or Not to Be - on TV!

by Jan Lee, Chico Ranches Ltd.



## *Promoting the role purebred Angus play in beef production just too good to miss*

These days consumer education is key. The chance to promote the role purebred cattle play in the beef business in Canada does not arise all that often, so when it came knocking at our door, it seemed wise to grasp the opportunity to feature both our industry and the Angus brand.

But what if that promotion is for television - it can be a frightening thought! That's exactly what happened this fall at our place, Chico Ranches Ltd., located northwest of Airdrie, AB.

"Farm Fresh" is a 10 part series, with each half hour program introducing Shaw TV and Shaw Direct viewers to three farm and ranch families in the Southern Alberta region.

It's a virtual flavour-filled road trip to learn how they grow their crops, feed their animals and produce their food, according to Jim Cummings, Senior Producer at Shaw in charge of the series.

"UFA is proud to support agriculture education and awareness initiatives and we believe that Farm Fresh can extend this reach to the urban audience," says Jenn Norrie, Manager, Communications and Brand Strategy at UFA, the series sponsor.

Lucky us live just in the right region - close to Calgary with great views of surrounding cities, countryside and the Rockies. When contacted about filming our priority at the time was preparing our cattle for the Black Magic Production Sale. Shaw was enthused with the concept as an interesting addition to their series, and after much thought we agreed to participate. The focus: these are the cows that produce the bulls that go on to produce the good Angus beef you eat.

Personally I am most comfortable behind the scenes whether it be at a sale, a meeting or in every day life, and thought it was an opportunity to document what is involved in a "reality" TV shoot; all while quietly staying in the background.

Boy was I fooled. Too many photos taken that day ended up being of me shooting them filming me.



### **Top Photo:**

John Lee explains how purebreds are an integral part of the beef business in Canada, highlighting the global respect for Canadian Angus genetics

### **Above:**

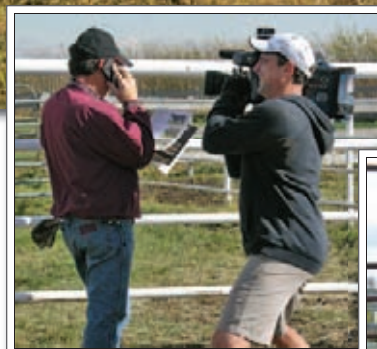
A bred heifer destined for the Black Magic Sale is clipped and lot tagged for filming - the cameras were up close and personal with 35Y enjoying all the attention





### Directions:

- *walk past camera*
- *turn around*
- *do it all over again*



**Top Left:** Scouting locations on a beautiful October afternoon

**Bottom Left:** UFA's Jenn Norrie discusses strategy with John

**Above:** Acting skills on a phone call to demonstrate cell phones as essential equipment in a purebred operation

[Directions: Photo by Tyler Calhoun]



**Above:** Shaw TV Senior Producer Jim Cummings

**Below:** Who's shooting who? Standoff with Shaw TV Senior Cameraman Ron Radke



The afternoon started with producer Jim and cameraman Ron arriving to scout locations. They ideally wanted a scenic panorama and were immediately sent to our west field which boasts a beautiful backdrop of mountains in the distance. The pair spent quite some time setting up a camera on a finicky pan slide to interview John about daily life on a purebred cattle ranch, its challenges and rewards. Then it was off to the barn where John and our daughter Dallas clipped and tagged a heifer while explaining all the work that goes into getting ready for a sale; how the income from that one day effects your entire year.

Recording for TV may not be quite as nerve wracking as shooting live, it still can be a challenge to remember all you want to say. Not to mention getting your point across clearly yet intelligently, and in terms the average consumer can easily understand. I found this out first hand when finally convinced to mike up and talk - that Jim is a persuasive fellow. While John is relatively comfortable in front of a camera, I certainly am not. Fortunately the capable 'A Team' from Shaw had a way of asking the right questions and listening to the answers, guiding you to tell your story in your own words.

What do consumers want to see? Where and how their food is raised (as it really does not originate in the grocery store). Our dog Jessie riding on the back of the quad got a lot of footage, as did 'guard' donkey Ernie, along with our sale females and herd bulls. They all behaved beautifully for the cameras.

Four hours and many, many gigabytes of footage later, production was done at our place, but continued two days later at the Black Magic Sale at Eldon, where Jim wanted to check up on the bred heifer filmed earlier at the ranch. It is amazing how quickly people can disperse when they see a television camera pointed in their direction, but there were also many at the sale that day who cooperated with the filming. Thanks to them all for smiling and their participation, along with the other Black Magic family operations, Dallas and fiancé Kyle, our son TJ and whenever-we-need-help family friend Tyler Calhoun.

How the segment ends up after editing I guess we will all find out soon enough. Yes, you 'stage' much of the action to represent reality (I don't recall ever strolling with John along a fence line unless we were actually fencing); you describe your life and product the best way you can and then hope your message gets across in the final cut.

I now know why news crews have their go-to people they ask for a quote or interview time after time. It is obvious that speaking in front of a camera would get easier with each experience.

Too often the only time our industry is seen on TV is when a weather or disease related disaster occurs. If you get the chance for a positive promotion, take advantage.

Note to Producer Jim: If you asked again if there was anything else I wanted to say, I'd have a quite a long list. I'll be better prepared in my next life!

## When & Where

"UFA Farm Fresh" Episode 6 (of 10) featuring purebred Angus at Chico Ranches Ltd. will premiere on Shaw TV @ 7:30 pm, Sunday, November 18th. It will go into a rotation throughout the following week and will also be available online. A second run of playbacks is scheduled for January 2013, with the series then available on the national Shaw Direct satellite system.