



# The Angus Link

by **MATT PERRIER**, director of commercial programs, American Angus Association

## 'They're worth more if they're black.'

In 1959, when this American Angus Association marketing campaign was released, cattlemen across the United States knew exactly which breed it promoted. However, given the growing numbers of beef breeds marketing black, polled seedstock to commercial producers today, it might be a bit more difficult to determine whose breed the advertisement was promoting if it were published in a current magazine. The need has arisen to differentiate commercial cattle sired by registered Angus bulls by something more than hide color.

The Association has recently enhanced its AngusSource program to help differentiate feeder cattle and replacement females of known Angus origin. Groups of Angus-influenced calves may now be enrolled in the AngusSource program, and permanent ear tags will be supplied to assist producers in setting these cattle apart from "commodity black calves."

In addition, information about the source, the genetics of the sires and how the calves have been managed will be compiled into a document that can be presented to potential buyers. As the number of branded products and differentiated marketing structures increases, buyers will come to base cattle's value on the visual identification (ID) of the tag and information.

Calves enrolled in AngusSource are not tied to individual sires or dams, but Angus registration numbers of all possible sires or dams' sires should be listed. In addition, the calves' approximate birth month, year, and location of the calves' origin is required. Further information about the health history and management of the cattle is encouraged.

An official AngusSource ear tag, available through the Association for \$1, enrolls an Angus-influenced calf into the program. Here are some of the basics of the program.

- It is available for feeder cattle or replacement females.
- Cattle are enrolled as a group; no individual ties to sires or dams are required.
- Permanent, preprinted tags show state of origin (for group), site ID, within-herd tag number (customized to producer's specifications) and a unique 15-digit ID.
- Tags will be shipped directly to producers at no charge. There is a minimum order of 20 tags.
- Calves and/or their dams must be sired by registered Angus bulls. A minimum 50% Angus breed makeup is desired.

- Registration numbers of all Angus sires and/or dams' sires are listed, giving buyers an assurance of Angus parentage, not just hide color.
  - Prior to marketing, official documentation may be printed, listing the group's source, genetics and processing history for potential buyers.
  - Tagged cattle are eligible for online marketing listings, participation in special AngusSource sales (where available) and other marketing opportunities.
  - These tags can serve as a medium for data transfer from feedyards or packing plants, but they *do not guarantee data feedback*. Arrangements for data collection and feedback should be made between the buyer and seller at marketing time.
- Calves may be enrolled in AngusSource by:
1. enrolling online at [www.angussource.com](http://www.angussource.com);
  2. calling the Commercial Programs Department at (816) 383-5100; or
  3. contacting your Association regional manager.

### A need for simplicity

Commercial cow-calf producers want to be paid for what they produce. Feedyard and packer buyers want more information about the cattle they purchase. Neither group wants to add large amounts of recordkeeping, labor or cost to achieve this objective.

The AngusSource program is the result of the study of countless comprehensive, high-tech ID and data-management systems. After examining many of these complex options, we opted for a simpler approach. We recognize that a visual ID system is not the perfect solution for transferring large amounts of detailed data throughout the beef industry. Plus, this program will not guarantee information feedback from the feedyard or packing plant.

However, a visual ID program should be an ideal fit for producers wanting a low-cost, simple method to convey source, processing and genetic information on their marketed groups of Angus-sired cattle. If agreements are established between buyers and sellers



at the time cattle are sold, these tags can serve as a medium to document and transfer detailed data back from the packing plant.

### Let the tags do the talking

Many times producers are not present when their calves are sold through the sale ring. If they are, the marketing system is not conducive to accurately conveying information about the genetics and management of the cattle. Even when cattle are sold direct, the second, third and fourth owners are rarely informed of any information past the average weight, hide color and estimated "frame" of the group.

Eventually, recognition of the AngusSource program will increase among feedyards across the country. In the early stages, though, feedyards enrolled in the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP) will likely be the most knowledgeable about the AngusSource program. If requested, many of these yards will offer opportunities to link AngusSource tags to their FLP tags so the valuable carcass information may be passed back to the farm or ranch of origin.

Provided cattle enrolled in the AngusSource program maintain their tags throughout the beef industry chain, each potential buyer will know at a glance that they are more than just black-hided. Buyers will know that cattle with AngusSource ear tags are Angus-influenced cattle with a documented history. In addition, the Marketing Document will outline detailed source, genetic and processing information about the cattle, making them stand out like a Mercedes on a car lot full of Yugos.

Will this be worth the few cents per hundredweight that enrollment in AngusSource costs? Enroll your calf crop in AngusSource. You'll find it worth much more than that.

### Basic steps for producers interested in participating in AngusSource:

#### Step 1 — Enroll cattle and order tags at [www.angussource.com](http://www.angussource.com) or at (816) 383-5100

Enter:

- location and contact information;
- number of steers/heifers;
- birth months and years;
- calves and/or cows' sire registration numbers;
- breed makeup of cow herd (optional); and
- shipping and payment information for tags.

#### Step 2 — Tag calves

Tags may only be used in qualifying Angus-influenced calves (see above). Calves must be tagged prior to shipping from farm/ranch of origin.

#### Step 3 — Enter marketing information (optional)

- A marketing profile may be created for feeder calves or replacement females at any time after tags are ordered.
- Health, management and marketing information may be entered.
- An official "AngusSource Marketing Document" will be printed, listing all entered information on the group of cattle.
- Source, genetic and processing information will be compiled into one simple document, including a standardized form to distribute to potential buyers or brokers.

#### Step 4 — Market cattle

- Inform market manager, broker or buyer about cattle history by presenting the "AngusSource Marketing Document."
- Cattle may be sold through a market, directly from the farm or ranch, or on a video.
- Look for special AngusSource calf sales at participating markets.

