

# Angus Releases Heifer Pregnancy EPDs

Whether you have 20 or 2,000 cows, success in the U.S. cattle business lies in your herd's reproductive ability; however, those traits are among the most difficult to characterize from a genetic standpoint.

But after years of collecting breeding

records, the American Angus Association has introduced a genetic selection tool to help Angus breeders and their customers better identify animals with desirable reproductive ability.

The heifer pregnancy expected progeny

difference (HP EPD) will measure the chance of a sire's daughters becoming pregnant during a normal breeding season.

"One of our research initiatives has been to characterize reproductive traits in the Angus breed. Now, after much time

in the research phase, we've developed a database that allows us to provide EPDs for the reproductive complex," says Bill Bowman, American Angus Association chief operating officer (COO).

The HP EPD isn't a new concept. The Association began reporting heifer pregnancy research values in its biannual *Sire Evaluation Report* in 2007.

In June 2011, the Association Board of Directors approved moving the HP EPD from research to reality. Beginning July 8, the EPD began appearing weekly alongside other maternal trait EPDs such as calving ease maternal (CEM), maternal milk (Milk), mature weight (MW), mature height (MH) and cow energy value (\$EN).

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— *Sally Northcutt*

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"Angus breeders and their customers continue to recognize the value of selection tools available through the Association," says Sally Northcutt, Association director of genetic research. "The weekly heifer pregnancy evaluation will provide more real-time EPDs for improving the probability of successful heifer breedings in the herd."

Heifer pregnancy EPDs are developed using breeding records, pregnancy-check and calving data, as well as pedigree information. The unit of measure for the EPD is a percentage — a higher EPD is more favorable.

"In this case, when comparing two sires on heifer pregnancy EPDs, a higher-EPD sire would be expected to have daughters with a greater probability or chance of becoming pregnant than a sire with the lower EPD," Northcutt explains.

Although reproductive traits are challenging to measure and tend to be more lowly heritable in comparison to growth and carcass traits, Northcutt says the Association is spearheading an aggressive push to expand the breeding database, with first-calf heifers as the initial target for selection tools.

Visit [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org) to learn more about heifer pregnancy or other EPDs. The American Angus Association releases National Cattle Evaluation (NCE) EPDs every Friday, providing the most rapidly available selection tools in the beef cattle industry.

