



The Front Gate

by **ALLEN MOCZYGEMBA**, CEO, American Angus Association

Angus feeder-calf program: Part 1

At the Angus Convention in Fort Worth, I unveiled the Association's plans to create a feeder-calf program. While it will help commercial cattlemen establish a genetic value for their feeder cattle, more importantly, I believe the program will drive the use of registered Angus bulls and tie calves back to superior Angus genetics.

A bit of background

If you think you've heard that message before, you should have, because it is one of the key strategies of our Long Range Strategic Plan.

Here is a bit of background. In developing the foundation of the plan, an internal task force spent a significant amount of time gathering input from all segments of the industry. Key findings were:

1. The program must be simple and easy to understand and enroll.
2. Cattle feeders face challenges when buying calves based on their genetic potential.

So, how will the Angus feeder-cattle program work?

Herds that are entered in the program will receive three genetic indexes. One will be for average daily gain, the second for quality grade, while the third will be an index for replacement heifers.

The scoring system is simple — the higher the score, the better. As a point of reference, the industry average score for each index is 100. Any score greater than 100 is above average. What type of bloodlines make up the average industry animal? The breed makeup used is 70% Angus, 13% other British, 13% Continental and 4% *Bos indicus*.

Enrollees will receive a certificate for their calves that will list the index score for each of the three traits. In addition, participants will have the option to list any health or any source-verification programs in which a producer may be participating.

Note that on the quality grade certificate, if a herd achieves a score of 125 or higher, the certificate will also include the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Targeting the Brand logo, which

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indicates the calves have the potential to qualify for CAB.

One point to keep in mind: Just because they're predominantly Angus calves doesn't mean they'll get a great score. However, on average, the more Angus influence, the better the score will be.

Who is eligible to participate?

First, a minimum of 75% of the bull battery must consist of registered bulls. By registered, the program determines they must be registered with a breed association. Of those registered bulls,

a minimum of 50% must be registered Angus bulls. Any unregistered bulls must have a DNA profile on file.

Second, we'll need to know the breed composition of the cow herd.

Third, the calf crop must be predominantly black, with the calves being 75% black, which is identical to the USDA GLA specification for CAB eligibility.

So, will it work? I'm confident that it will. While enrollments will start slowly, our projections show that a decade from now we'll enroll 1.5 million calves annually. We expect the program to continue to grow from there.

While we haven't finalized a price for the program yet, the pricing will be simple — just like the enrollment. There will be a single charge per head for the number of calves marketed.

Bottom line, the program will be easy for cattlemen to enroll their calves and easy for buyers to identify those Angus-influenced calves with superior genetics — just like it should be.



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3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997; phone: 816-383-5100; fax: 816-233-9703;
Office hours: (M-F) 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Central) • email: angus@angus.org
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Nichols, Iowa; phone: 641-369-2829; dave@nicholsfarms.biz

Industry appointments — CAB Board, Dwight 'Kip' Palmer, Palmer Food Services, New York; office: 585-424-3210; kpalmers@palmerfoods.com • **AGI Board liaison, Larry Kuehn**, U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, Nebraska; office: 402-762-4352; larry.kuehn@ars.usda.gov • **Foundation Board, Lamar Steiger**, Arkansas; cell: 479-531-0127; steiger.lamar@gmail.com • **Angus Productions Inc. Board, Mitch Rouda**, Farm Journal Media, Illinois; office: 847-318-0785; mrouda@farmjournal.com

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