



Up Front

by JOHN CROUCH, interim executive vice president, American Angus Association

Another chapter of sire evaluation completed

The Spring 2002 National Cattle Evaluation (NCE) analysis was completed in record time by Doyle Wilson and Abebe Hassen, Iowa State University (ISU). New data was posted on the American Angus Association Web site, www.angus.org, at 10 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 15, 2001, making the new expected progeny differences (EPDs) accessible to the world.

Record numbers

We are approaching a new and exciting time in the industry; a time when consumer satisfaction will be one of the determining factors in how food dollars are spent. The success of the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand has further focused the attention of Angus breeders toward the improvement of our end product through genetic selection and improved management.

In years past, the beef industry had few tools with which to effect directional change in quality and consistency of beef and beef products. The incorporation of real-time ultrasound technology for compositional traits into the Association's genetic evaluation process has aided producers greatly in the selection process.

A review of the spring 2002 ultrasound body composition database reveals data for a total of 7,622 sires; 101,346 dams; 101,280 yearling bulls; and 50,705 yearling heifers — a total of 260,953 animals. What a tremendous tribute this is to the Angus industry and to Angus breeders who began participating in this program in the spring of 1998.

Some trends

A total of 4,848 sires are listed in the spring 2002 *Angus Sire Evaluation Report*. Of these sires, 3,561 (a whopping 73.5%) have posted NCE or interim EPDs for ultrasound body composition traits. A further review of the data reveals a total of 906 (or 19%) simultaneously show positive EPDs for percent intramuscular fat (%IMF, or

marbling) and percent retail product (%RP, or lean yield). There can be no doubt that sires with these data can improve our industry, provided their genetic values for reproduction, growth and maternal value are acceptable.

In addition, the genetic trend for %IMF shows a strong, positive increase since 1995, and a positive genetic trend for %RP is shown since 1998. While this is excellent, the genetic trend for external fat also is positive, and this is an area that deserves considerable attention.

In selecting for composition, the question always arises, "If I select for increased values for marbling and yield, will my other traits suffer?" The answer has been debated many times. I would offer an analogy.

I love country-fried steak and gravy. However, should I dine on country-fried steak and gravy three times per day it would not be good for my health. Too much of any one thing is not as good as a balanced diet including all the basic food groups. The same analogy pertains to breeding cattle. As long as a proper balance between reproduction, growth

and composition is maintained in concert with environment and feed resources, female functionality should not be a problem.

The acceptance of ultrasound technology in lieu of traditional carcass evaluation by Angus breeders has been extraordinary and justifiably so. Unlike traditional, structured sire evaluation, wherein commercial test herds were very limited, ultrasound technology can be used by both large- and small-scale breeders.

A complete protocol is included in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) mailing, which contains ultrasound barn sheets and processed weaning data. Listings of certified ultrasound technicians are published in the *Angus Journal* and posted on the Angus home page (www.angus.org). They also can be requested from the American Angus Association.

Printed copy by request

As a service to producers who relied on the data to make critical business decisions, the Association for many years automatically mailed the *Sire Evaluation Report* to members and commercial producers who use Angus genetics. However, technology has changed the way many cattlemen access data from the Association. As more producers have realized the convenience of the searchable online version, the printed version has been used less.

Last fall we discontinued mailing the *Sire Evaluation Report*, saving the Association and its members thousands of dollars. We continue to produce and offer upon request a printed version of the report. To request a copy, contact Brenda Schafer at (816) 383-5100 or bschafer@angus.org.

