



**Use the letter 'N'
to identify calves
born in 2003.**

by **SUSAN RHODE**

Many years ago, livestock producers adopted an international year-letter designation system for animal identification (ID). This system correlates a year with a particular letter of the alphabet so that all animals born in that calendar year have one consistent element in their individual identifications.

Angus breeders most commonly use this system when tattooing their newborn

calves, using a combination of the letter for that particular year and a number for identification within the herd. To identify an animal registered with the American Angus Association, any combination of letters or numbers can be used when tattooing a calf, as long as the tattoo does not exceed four characters applied on a straight line. The tattoo must be the same in both ears.


The international year-letter designa-


tions for animal ID, as reported by the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) are as follows:


2002 — M
2003 — N
2004 — P
2005 — R
2006 — S
2007 — T


The letters I, O, Q and V are not used in this system.


Following are some helpful management tips to consider before tattooing newborn calves or when establishing a herd ID system. For a complete set of rules and guidelines regarding tattoos, refer to pages 10 and 11 of the American Angus Association's 2002 *Breeder's Reference Guide* or call the Member Services Department at (816) 383-5100.


- Calves should be identified at birth with an ear tag. Incorporate sire and dam ID either by code or color of tag. Waiting until the calf is at least 3 months old before tattooing will give you more satisfactory results.


- An Angus tattoo is composed of not more than four characters (the shorter, the better). It is applied on a single line and must be the same in both ears. A system using numbers, letters or a combination may be used.


- For best results always use fresh, green tattoo paste that has not been frozen. Using roll-on ink is discouraged.


- If you want to use a distinct herd ID tattoo other than the registration tattoo, it should be applied in only one ear and in a lobe other than the one used for the registration tattoo. Animals branded with a hot or cold iron must also carry a legible tattoo if they are to be eligible for registration.


- No two animals of the same sex born in the same year may have the same tattoo within a herd under one membership. Purchased animals with tattoos that duplicate tattoos of an animal in your herd should have other special identification (freeze brand, ear tag, etc.).

- To guarantee animal ID, tattoos should be checked at weaning and at any other convenient times. Always read tattoos for accuracy and legibility before delivery to a buyer, either at auction or private treaty, or before leaving for a show.

- Use a flashlight or spotlight when checking hard-to-read tattoos. Press the light to the outside of the ear to illuminate the marks.

- Buyers should check legibility and verify tattoos with registration certificates before making payment or accepting delivery of any animal.

- If any tattoo is unreadable and you are the breeder, re-tattoo the animal in a different lobe and notify your regional manager or the Member Services Department at the Association.

- Tattooing equipment, including pliers, digits and ink, may be purchased from livestock-supply dealers or directly from the American Angus Association. 