

STAND OUT

AngusLink PVP claims offer the means to differentiate your calves from the rest in the feeder-calf market.

by Whitney Whitaker, American Angus Association

As Dr. Suess says, “Why fit in when you were born to stand out?” When selling products on a value-based marketing system, products with value stand out. Opposite of that system is the commodity-based pricing system, a system designed not to differentiate based on value, but rather to pay based on averages. Of those two systems, which allows producers to stand out, differentiate their product and improve their bottom line?

AngusLinkSM is a program designed to reward those who choose to be different — to go the extra mile. AngusLink is for those who choose to use superior genetics and other management practices to set their calves apart from their competition.

AngusLink has two components: the AngusLink USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) and the Genetic Merit Scorecard[®] (GMS), explains Troy Marshall, director of commercial industry relations at the American Angus Association.

“From a commercial cattleman’s perspective, AngusLink offers several things,” says Marshall. “The PVP serves as a marketing tool for producers (see “Trust Through Transparency,” page 54), while the Genetic Merit Scorecard provides a benchmarking tool that allows you to see where your cattle are

genetically, relative to others in the industry.”

The services AngusLink provides differ from other similar programs, Marshall points out. A goal of AngusLink is to make commercial cattlemen more profitable, so the program provides marketing services for enrolled cattle, while verifying the genetics and management put into the cattle.

Banking the value

When cattlemen and women work hard to take care of the cattle they are raising, they should be rewarded for that commitment, Marshall says. AngusLink premiums provide those progressive and determined producers opportunity for a greater return on their investment.

During the 2020 summer video auctions, AngusLink-enrolled cattle brought an average premium of

\$9.33 per hundredweight (cwt.) across all programs. Since 2019, participants in the AngusLink program have been able to garner \$6.6 million in marketplace premiums.

“I am excited, because this type of marketing moves away from the commodity mind-set, so we can differentiate our cattle and capture the value,” says Marshall, noting it’s a better system than relying solely on reputation. “Now we have an objective way to measure the genetic potential of cattle.”

Premiums certainly promote operational longevity. However, knowing where an operation stands and where it wants to go also drives growth. When a producer receives a GMS on a set of calves, it shares the genetic merit and potential of that group while also serving as a benchmarking tool.

The GMS allows operations to see where the set of calves are compared to contemporaries and other operations in the industry. Benchmarking can help drive the competitive difference for producers raising and selling high-quality feeder cattle.

Customizable programs

One advantage to AngusLink is the opportunity to customize an enrollment, says Ginette Gottswiller, director of verification services for the Association. Producers can enroll in any of the claims that suit the needs and goals of their

operation. There are eight enrollment options:

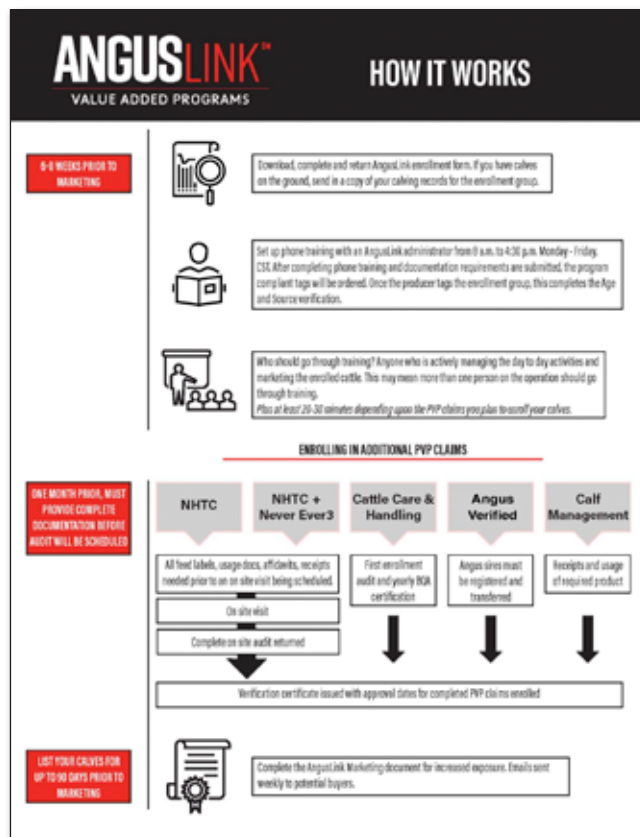
- ▶ GMS,
- ▶ Age and Source Verification (ASV),
- ▶ AngusVerified (AV, formerly Angus-sired Genetics),
- ▶ Calf Management,
- ▶ Cattle Care and Handling (CCH),
- ▶ Non-Hormone Treated Cattle (NHTC),
- ▶ NHTC/NeverEver3 (NE3), and
- ▶ Earth Claim's Global Animal Partnership (GAP) bundle that includes NHTC/NE3.

All operations must start with the ASV option before adding anything else, Gottswiller explains. ASV is a simple program, as it verifies the group age and source of cattle. Animals must be traceable to the ranch of origin and have records documenting when the first calf was born.

When enrolling in ASV, producers pay a per-head fee, which includes radio frequency identification (RFID) ear tags, she says.

Another straightforward claim is the AngusVerified claim. When most fed cattle are black-hided, this claim objectively verifies the cattle are 100% sired by registered Angus bulls, Gottswiller says. Enrolled calves must have been sired by a registered and properly transferred Angus bull, used naturally or by artificial insemination (AI).

While both NHTC and NE3 (sometimes referred to as verified natural) claims require more throughout the enrollment process, including an audit, the process is simple with proper management done beforehand, Gottswiller says. Producers have the option of



enrolling in NHTC if cattle have never received added hormones, such as a growth implant or heat synchronization product. If cattle have never received hormones, antibiotics or animal byproducts, they may be eligible for the NE3 claim.

Commercial cattlemen have the option of taking the NHTC and NE3 bundle a step further with the GAP bundle.

Enrolling in this option includes the NHTC and NE3 claims plus a verification for cattle raised according to certain animal welfare standards, Gottswiller says. The bundle is offered through AngusLink in partnership with EarthClaims.

Cattle Care and Handling and Calf Management are two claims

focused on improving animal welfare for the industry. Calf Management is a claim focused on proper documentation of a preventative health program, Gottswiller shares. Cattle Care and Handling is a similar documentation claim, but it is about documenting proper management and demonstrating a quality commitment to the cattle.

The Scorecard

AngusLink doesn't stop at the USDA PVP claims. The Genetic Merit Scorecard is a free program when enrolling in AngusVerified that is available to producers

looking to get paid for the genetics they are using.

"We have always known there is value in genetics. We just didn't have an objective, reliable way of describing those genetics," says Marshall. "The GMS provides us

that tool in the marketplace."

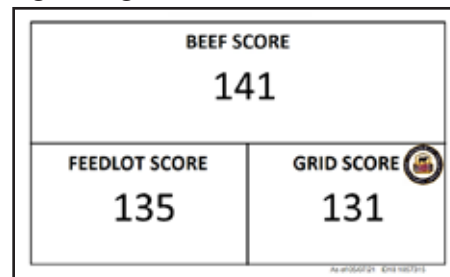
When enrolling a group of calves sired by predominantly registered Angus bulls, the GMS can

measure the genetic merit for the lot based on the expected progeny differences (EPDs) and genomics of the registered Angus sires.

The scorecard is composed of three values: the feedlot performance score, the grid score and the beef score (see "Sorting Gate," page 52). All three scores are

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Fig. 1: Angus Genetic Merit Scorecard



measured on a scale from 1 to 200, with 100 being average for the industry. Cattle that have a grid score of 125 or higher qualify for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) *Targeting the Brand*™ logo (see “Targeting quality?”). Cattle with

that label have a higher chance of meeting the CAB specifications.

How to enroll

Taking advantage of marketing opportunities provided by the AngusLink claims starts with an

enrollment form. Once the form is completed and calving records have been turned in, producers can begin selecting programs in which they wish to enroll, says Gottswiller. ASV is the foundational program with which all enrollees must start. A Genetic Merit Scorecard can be included as long as a majority of the cattle being enrolled were sired by registered Angus bulls. Registration numbers are necessary when determining the scorecard for every bull used to sire the calf crop being enrolled.

All claims require a phone training, Gottswiller says. If enrolling in the AngusVerified claim, 100% of calves must be out of registered Angus bulls. The NHTC, NE3 and GAP claims do require an on-site audit. That is a way for you to showcase your herd and management to the reviewer.

Making a difference

Marshall shares his excitement about AngusLink not only because of the marketing opportunities it presents, but because it gives producers the opportunity to improve their operations. Six claims fit under the AngusLink umbrella, allowing producers to customize their experience to fit their operational goals.

Those who are eager to make a difference in the marketplace and who go the extra mile are the ones who can reap the benefits of AngusLink.

“AngusLink can truly make a difference in this industry by linking all segments of the industry together with the consumer and profitability in mind,” says Marshall. **I**

Targeting quality?

Adding value to calves takes more than black hides and top-notch management. Genetic makeup is just as important.

Cattlemen can call attention to high-quality genetics through *Targeting the Brand*™, a program identifying cattle that meet key genetic criteria to supply the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand. In conjunction with the AngusLinkSM Process Verified Program (PVP), calves enrolled for the Genetic Merit Scorecard® (GMS) may bear the *Targeting the Brand* logo if the group has a grid score of at least 125, where 100 is industry average.

The grid score is derived from the marbling, fat and ribeye area expected progeny differences (EPDs) of all Angus sires for the group, which along with your herd’s breed composition, helps predict carcass merit for calves marketed on a quality grid. The group must be predominantly solid black, meeting the hide specifications for the brand and other Angus-based premium beef programs.

“Only 10% of cattle are enrolled in any PVP,” says Ginette Gottswiller, American Angus Association director of verification services. “And only 50% of AngusLink users take advantage of the Genetic Merit Scorecard.”

It’s easy to use, and enrolling in the AngusVerified PVP (previously Angus-sired Genetics) qualifies groups for the scorecard. Commercial cattlemen need their bulls’ registration papers transferred to their name to get the information for free.

“Otherwise, getting the genetic scores costs \$50,” Gottswiller explains.

Highlight the genetic scores when marketing calves at any sale, and point out the *Targeting the Brand* logo so buyers can easily identify lots that have the genetics more likely to qualify for premium beef programs like CAB, she advises.

Using registered Angus bulls that meet *Targeting the Brand* requirements of +0.65 marbling EPD and +55 Grid dollar value index (\$G) is one of the easiest ways to capture value from the brand. An Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) carcass records analysis showed these thresholds are most likely to produce calves that can average 50% CAB acceptance at licensed packing plants.

These scores are only one place to start targeting quality in your herd. If your calves already top the auction market, you’re on the right track. *Targeting the Brand* lets you tap into more high-quality markets and get more for your feeder calves.

— by Miranda Reiman, Certified Angus Beef LLC



Editor’s note: Whitney Whitaker is a communications specialist for the American Angus Association.