



# THE ANGUS LINK

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## Taking the next step

The American Angus Association Board of Directors recently completed a thorough long-range planning session to map the future direction for the Association. Here's the adopted mission statement from this planning session:

"To provide programs, services, technology and leadership to enhance the genetics of the Angus breed, broaden its influence within the beef industry, and expand the market for superior-tasting, high-quality Angus beef worldwide."

This mission statement gives a clear indication of the desire to expand the opportunities for Angus genetics in the beef industry. The adopted goals also outline a dedicated approach for the Association to continue to be

a source of valuable programs, services and information to the entire beef industry.

Performance data generated by dedicated Angus breeders and maintained for more than 40 years as part of the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program has produced the largest, most predictable database available in the beef industry. The selection tools generated from and supplied to Angus breeders and the commercial beef industry in the form of expected progeny differences (EPDs) from this database have allowed tremendous progress through genetic improvement. From production and growth to end-product value, the genetic evaluation process is constantly evolving to provide the beef industry more useful tools.

### The Angus Beef Record Service

Even with all the available information generated through performance records from registered Angus cattle, a void still exists for a system to incorporate information on Angus genetics used in the commercial industry. A desire to provide a tool to commercial cow-calf producers so they can evaluate the genetic effects in their herds led to the creation of the new Angus Beef Record Service (BRS).

Angus BRS, the Association's newest program, is a system designed for commercial cow-calf producers to keep individual performance records on their herds. Angus BRS provides a mechanism for commercial producers to keep performance records that can, in turn, be used as a valuable decision-making tool to enhance profitability.

The data compiled through Angus BRS will allow commercial producers to summarize their cattle performance records, which in turn can monitor lifetime productivity and potentially enhance profits in the cow herd. Collecting information from conception to carcass and tying that performance to profitability indicators allow a producer to make decisions based on fact rather than assumption.

The Angus BRS program will take information from a producer's cow herd, including breed composition, sire information, breeding information, calving data, and any performance or carcass data collected on a calf. Initially, production data will be analyzed, weights adjusted and reports returned on the information. We intend to develop genetic predictions (estimated dollar differences) for the

cattle in terms of reproduction, growth and end-product value using the actual data submitted while also tying to the Angus database where possible.

### Putting the pieces together

The Angus BRS program is up and running with commercial producers currently enrolling their herds. Customer enrollment and dam enrollment forms are sent to producers requesting information about Angus BRS.

The flexible system allows producers enrolling their individual females to provide detailed inputs on sires, maternal grandsires and the breed makeup of the dams in an attempt to characterize the cows that make up the herds. Once the cow-herd information is in the system, preprinted forms with the cows' herd identifications (IDs) are returned to the producer for future inputs.

A key part of the Angus BRS program involves getting a handle on the reproductive aspect of the producer's herd. Breeding reports gather artificial insemination (AI) and natural service breeding dates on each female of breeding age in the herd. Sire groups used in multisire pasture-breeding programs are also recorded and maintained in the system in an attempt to completely analyze the various sire inputs used by a producer. Pregnancy-exam data and cow-disposal data provide an opportunity to apply a type of Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) of the reproductive performance of the participating herds.

The submitted breeding information is used to complete a preprinted calving and weaning report that is next sent to the producer with estimated calving dates and projected sires for the upcoming calf crop. Calving information and weaning data on the calves are then submitted, with reports returned containing an individual summary of the adjusted performance information from each calf.

A summary is also computed that allows for comparison of the progeny of the different sires or sire groups. There is a cow breed summary that will analyze how the various groups of cows performed in the herd, as well as a breakdown with progeny averages from the different ages of the cows in the herd.

The Angus BRS Herd Summary is an exciting tool that will give producers a look at important, economically relevant information about their herds. Reproductive performance



measures — including pregnancy and calving percentages, calf crop percentage, and death loss and female replacement rates — are generated on this annual summary. It will provide a look at calving distribution within a calving season, and the production-performance measures analyze growth levels, including pound weaned per exposed female.

These levels of performance are compared to other herds, initially using national SPA averages as benchmarks. As Angus BRS data is submitted, the comparisons will be against other herds in the Angus BRS program, with the potential to eventually include a regionalized set of averages, giving producers a snapshot of how their herds are stacking up.

Bottom line, improving the pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed at breeding is a crucial economic factor in a profitable operation. Accomplishing this by increasing the number of calves weaned while simultaneously increasing weaning weights requires collecting the information and analyzing the factors to make improvements. Angus BRS will help make these decisions.

Yearling data, feedlot performance data and ultimately carcass data on individual animals can be tied to the cow herd, allowing selection to improve all aspects of the breeding system.

Value-based marketing continues to become more of a realization in the beef industry. The ability to tie the production sector to the end product becomes important not only from an information standpoint, but it also becomes relevant from a profit standpoint. Whether you are selling feeder calves at weaning or retaining finished cattle to harvest, more information is required by potential buyers to acquire top prices.

Source verification will become the next big leap to capture more value for your product.

For example, going to an auction to sell your calves with a complete set of genetic, management and health records, along with any historical data on feedlot performance or carcass, is going to become a necessity.

Angus BRS will be a tool to help producers take the data they may have been collecting for years and relate that information in a useful format. Think of the potential as you sell cattle with predictions on how they will perform in the feedlot or on the rail.

## Data flow in the future

For a program like Angus BRS to really assist a producer, it has to be a practical system that can be functional and time-efficient, as well as provide valuable information. Angus BRS was developed to work with paper forms and summaries, but we also see tremendous interest in the ability to capture and to transfer data electronically.

The Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) package is being adapted for commercial producers, interfacing with the Angus BRS program. AIMS is currently used by registered Angus breeders to register calves and to submit performance data to the Association.

The number of records sent to our office electronically continues to climb. For example, through the first nine months of this fiscal year, 35% of the yearling weights were submitted electronically, compared with just more than 7% in 1999. Commercial producers who already may be using another software package also can send their data into Angus BRS electronically.

The use of electronic identification (EID) is starting to expand. As it is embraced in the packing and feedlot industries, we will see its use also increase dramatically on the ranch. EID will assist producers in capturing data on

their herds and providing source-verification information to potential buyers. EID will become an important tool to trace cattle from ranch of origin through the packing segment and to relay that information back to the producer. Angus BRS will have the capability to maintain EID numbers and a national identification system that potentially could be used by the industry in the near future.

Angus BRS is a tool for serious producers who want to characterize their commercial cow herds and link end-product value to the live animal. Taking reams of data and information and turning it into a useful production tool is the goal of Angus BRS. The identification and evaluation of superior bulls used in commercial programs that currently may go undetected through the beef industry will be facilitated by Angus BRS.

Making decisions on fact rather than assumption or tradition will keep your program in a position to take advantage of superior Angus genetics. Cattle producers must use all available information to remain competitive in today's industry. Keeping records is a necessity in today's world!

## How to get started

Herds currently are being enrolled in Angus BRS. Producers may contact the Association to obtain an enrollment form and a set of guidelines further explaining the program. The information and forms are available on the Angus Web site at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org). There is no charge to enroll your cow herd in the program. A \$2/head charge is assessed for each calf weaning weight processed through Angus BRS. If you have any questions about Angus BRS or AIMS, contact the Association at (816) 383-5100.

