



The Angus Link

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Make data meaningful

How can I get feedyard and carcass data back on my cattle? It's the million-dollar question. Or is it?

"I continuously hear this question from cattlemen nationwide," states Bill Mies, Future Beef Operations LLC, "and I always ask them, 'Do you have individual identification and management to link the calf back to the cow (and bull, if possible)?' If the answer is 'No,' then why would you want the data?"

Maybe the true million-dollar question is, "What must this producer have to use this data properly?"

- A cow tag.
- A calf tag.
- An identified sire or sire group.
- A birth date.
- A weaning weight.
- A program to tie this raw information into useful management and marketing tools to help ranchers increase profitability.

In its simplest form, that describes the Angus Beef Record Service (BRS) of the American Angus Association. Released in fall 2000, the Angus BRS program was created to assist commercial cattlemen in their quest for information regarding end-product merit, feedyard performance, pre- and postweaning gain, cow fertility, and maternal characteristics.

Recently, Angus BRS Online was activated to allow for online submission, viewing and sorting of your cow herd's data. With the online capabilities, producers enrolled in Angus BRS not only can input and access their herds' information but also can download the information easily to their existing software applications (Microsoft® Excel, Access, Word, etc.) for further analysis. Of course, the data is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the Angus BRS Web site, www.beefrecords.com, or through the Association Web site, www.angus.org.

Overview

Angus BRS provides a system for commercial producers to keep performance records about their animals, regardless of breed composition. The

records can be used as valuable decision-making tools to enhance ranchers' profitability. In addition, they can give you a definite sellers' advantage at market time.

Producers can submit information about their cow herds, including sire information, breeding records, calving and weaning data, and any additional performance or carcass data collected about their calves. For \$2/calf, the raw data is then converted into more-comparative numbers according to Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) guidelines. The data can help producers make selection decisions for their cow herds while supplying information to help market the calf progeny as steers and replacement heifers.

The Angus BRS program provides a tool for serious producers who wish to link the end product to the producing factory by identifying genetics that work in their operation. By using individual animal identification (ID) [either electronic ID (EID) or traditional tag, tattoo or number brands], comprehensive submission forms, and reports generated by the American Angus Association to evaluate and to compare the data, cattle producers can characterize their commercial cow herds and have a higher-quality, more marketable product for their customer.

The process

Angus BRS is structured to be simple for commercial producers to use. But it still is capable of being extremely inclusive, holding detailed information for various traits in the areas of fertility, performance and carcass characteristics. Required information for enrollment includes: individual IDs for dam, sire and calf; breed(s) of sire and dam; breeding season dates; birth year of cow; birth date of calf; and weaning weight of calf.

In addition, such optional fields as birth weight, electronic ID, hip height, mature weight, cow temperament, body condition scores (BCS), carcass characteristics and countless other traits allow users to customize the program to fit their management and recordkeeping needs.

Submitting information

Records may be submitted by completing printed forms available from the Association or electronically by submitting the information via the Internet. Or, if producers already have their records on a spreadsheet or relational database software application, records can be converted into the Angus BRS database format at no cost. And, with recent enhancements to the Angus BRS Online submission program, users now can enter and retrieve data interactively on the Internet.

Free of charge for the program's users, Angus BRS Online is becoming a great alternative for producers interested in maintaining large amounts of reference data but uninterested in spending large amounts of money on production-management software packages and updates. Because of the speed and relative ease with which modifications can be made to Internet-based applications, producers can have the luxury of state-of-the-art technologies without continually investing time and money in software upgrades.

Following is a step-by-step process for submitting records on paper or online.

STEP 1: Complete customer enrollment data with pertinent contact information.

STEP 2: Enter Dam Enrollment information, listing within-herd ID numbers [tags, EIDs, brands, etc.], birth date, breed and sire information for all breeding-age females.

Upon receiving the data (and each subsequent form submitted), the Association will generate reports, to be returned to the producer either on paper or electronically, containing blanks for the next step's information to be entered. Each animal enrolled also will receive a unique American identification number (AIN), establishing its exclusive identity worldwide. After processing the dam enrollment information, the customer can complete Sire Enrollment and Breeding Report information.

STEP 3: Complete Sire Enrollment data, listing herd ID, breed and

registration numbers (if applicable) of all sires used in your herd. Sire groups can be formed for multiple-bull pastures.

STEP 4: Complete the Breeding Form, listing pertinent information, such as artificial insemination (AI) service sires, pasture sire IDs, turnout and pickup dates for pasture bulls and groups, and pregnancy-test results. From this information, the Association can generate a Breeding Summary and the Calving and Weaning Report Form.

STEP 5: Enter the Calving and Weaning Report data — calf ID, sex, sire, dam, birth date and weaning information — as well as optional information such as birth weight, birth code, weaning hip height and sales price per pound. Cow information, such as BCS, weight, height, temperament score and disposal code, also can be submitted.

From this report, the Association can generate several useful summaries, including the Calf Summary, the Sire Summary, the Cow Herd Summary, a Cow Breed Summary, and a Herd Summary of Reproduction and Production Performance.

STEP 6: Complete the postweaning reports (if applicable), such as yearling weight and height (especially important for replacement females), in- and out-weights at the feedyard, and carcass information at the processing plant.

Complete system

Angus BRS also works in conjunction with other commercial programs provided through the American Angus Association and Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB). As with Angus BRS, all of these programs are accessible via the Internet or by calling or faxing the information to the Association.

► Angus Resource Clearinghouse Network (ARCNet) is an online exchange of information among various production segments of the beef industry regarding Angus-influenced feeder cattle and replacement heifers for sale privately or through livestock markets across the United States. It is listed at www.arcnetonline.com, or it can be accessed through www.angus.org/arcnet. Groups of commercial cattle may be submitted online or on forms available from the American Angus Association.

The program was augmented this winter, and now it includes more detailed information relative to health, management and genetic data about the cattle listed for sale. In today's value-based marketing climate, that information will prove beneficial for quality-focused producers searching for higher cattle values.

► CAB Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) is a program initiated by CAB's Supply Development Branch to utilize the feeding industry in the quest to increase the supply of high-quality cattle qualifying for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand.

Angus BRS forms are available to track feedyard data, such as individual in- and out-weights, implant regimes, and health and management data, providing calves entered on the Angus BRS program maintain their identities all the way to the feedyard. In addition, the feedyard is a critical link to the packing facilities, in order to get individual carcass data collected and transferred into the Angus BRS program for processing.

As we see the industry rapidly move toward a value-based marketing system, information from all sectors of the production beef industry must be shared, and the data must be tied back to the sire and dam. Through proper processing and comparison against large amounts of similar information, the data can be analyzed and used to make better selection and management decisions for all producers.

Documenting value

As Mies stated, without current, factual, usable information, your high-quality cattle are worth little more than commodity prices. Today, and especially in the future, accurate information about fertility, performance and end-product merit will be imperative in order to garner top dollar for your cattle.

Who's going to pay you for it? Historically, that has been the question when producers speak of trying to produce higher-quality cattle with more information behind them. However, when folks such as Greg Arendt, manager of Valentine Livestock Auction Market, Valentine, Neb., start talking, it becomes

more than just talk — it then tells of the increased demand for those higher-quality cattle with information to support them.

Arendt tells the story of a sizable group of 725-pound (lb.) Angus-sired steers that brought \$6/hundredweight (cwt.) less than a heavier set of high-quality Angus steers sold the same day, through the same ring. The main difference was that the higher-valued cattle had carcass information from past contemporaries from the same operation.

"What I need," Arendt says, "is carcass information on all of these cattle. That information just elevates the producer's opportunity to sell cattle for more dollars."

Arendt goes on to say, "The market does not pay premiums. It only pays the per pound value of the cattle. Premiums are paid on the added information and knowledge of what these cattle will do when they get to the feedyard and packing plant."

Why would that information increase their value? Value-based marketing systems are now requiring more knowledge about a set of cattle than simply hide color and weight. Each bit of accurate information listed tacks on dollars to the sale price of cattle.

The industry indications coming from Extension personnel, packers, feeders, auction market managers and even progressive cow-calf producers are sending the same signal. True premium dollars for calves will not be gathered until honest, accurate information about each individual calf can be provided. Angus BRS gathers all of that data, processes it and offers it back to cow-calf producers to be used as they wish in their own operations. It can be used in selection, management and eventually to help market cattle.

The buyers are asking for data from past generations and present genetics.

The Angus BRS program provides that information today. How long can you afford to wait to start gathering information to help market your cattle for higher values?

