



Up Front

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

Creating opportunities

The year 2004 was ushered in with great fanfare and celebration throughout the country. With the New Year also comes a renewed commitment on the part of the American Angus Association to continue increasing the use of Angus genetics in the commercial beef industry and increasing consumer demand and acceptance for high-quality beef and beef products.

Angus commitment

Angus breeders who attended the American Angus Association's Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky., in November were treated to an informational forum on Sunday afternoon preceding the Board Candidates Open Meeting. Staff members Matt Perrier, Bill Bowman and Sally Dolezal capably and enthusiastically elaborated on exciting new programs recently adopted by the Board of Directors.

The first topic of discussion was AngusSource, which was released in August 2003 to assist you in marketing Angus-influenced cattle (see The Angus Link, page 16). AngusSource was the

subject of my October 2003 "Up Front" column.

The second program centered on a discussion of newly developed multi-trait Dollar Value (\$Value) Indexes, which currently include Feedlot Value (\$F), Grid Value (\$G) and Beef Value (\$B).

For the past half-century, the primary focus of the Association has been on building demand for Angus genetics in the commercial sector. The use of Angus bulls in commercial herds has increased from 26% to 60% since 1985, according to surveys of commercial producers.

In addition to this focus, some 65% of the national commercial cow herd is either Angus or Angus-influenced. This increased demand for Angus has also been accompanied by requests from commercial producers for assistance in genetic selection and marketing. AngusSource and \$Value Indexes are tremendous steps forward in providing this assistance.

\$B represents the expected average dollar value per head difference on progeny postweaning performance and carcass value. Two components of \$B

are \$F and \$G. \$B is not designed to be driven by one factor, such as quality, lean yield or weight. Rather, it is a dynamic result of the application of commercial market values to Angus genetics for both feedlot and carcass merit.

\$B facilitates simultaneous, multitrait genetic improvement for feedlot and carcass merit, based on dollars and cents. In fact, it is a culmination of the yearnings of researchers who realized more than a half-century ago that the genetic evaluation process would not be complete until economic values and genetic values were combined.

Team approach

New programs and services adopted by the Board of Directors are courageously approached. These programs are conceived, crafted, torn apart and re-crafted several times by many different people before they are approved. No program, however, will ever get perfected and used to its fullest without input from the users.

Get on track

Will Rogers probably said it best — "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

The cattle we raise today perform in ways we would have considered impossible 20 years ago. History has proven that our programs were on the right track then, but we knew we couldn't just sit there. We had to improve our programs and our cattle if we were to prevail.

We have all observed programs that were successful for a period, but then just sat there. Emotion, tradition and comfort overruled science, economics and progress. As Angus breeders, we cannot afford to be complacent and rest on our laurels. As breeders, we must continue our quest for more consistent, more profitable seedstock. As an Association, we must continue our quest to provide service and programs that indeed create opportunities for our members and our affiliates.

