



The Angus Link

by **JIM SHIRLEY**, *director of commercial programs and vice president of industry relations, American Angus Association*

Change: It's in the air

As I stepped outside this morning I realized that I was no longer in South Dakota. My glasses immediately fogged up, and I had a strange feeling; I knew then what a potato feels like when it is dropped into scalding hot water to be boiled.

Yes, we also have hot weather on the Northern Plains, and when the temperature is more than 100° F and the wind is blowing (as it always does) it feels like a blast furnace. But, we never have this dreadful humidity.

As I was grumbling about the weather during breakfast at a local restaurant, the waitress informed me that if I didn't like the weather, I should just wait. It would change. Well, change in temperatures would be welcome in Saint Joseph, Mo.

Change is already happening at the American Angus Association.

Expanding staff

As many of you might already know, Matt Perrier has moved back to the family ranch in Eureka, Kan. We know that he will attack the challenges of

ranching with the same vigor and enthusiasm that he brought to the table as director of commercial programs here at the Association. I have assumed his responsibilities, and Sara Moyer has joined our staff as director of industry and member communications. We hope to continue to build upon the strong commercial programs that Matt already has in place.

Due to continued growth in number of registered Angus operations and commercial operations utilizing Angus genetics, the Association has added two new regional managers to our staff. This brings the number of regional managers to 13 (see page 57), allowing us to reduce the size of several areas and permit them more time to work with commercial breeders. Vern Frey will travel Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota; and Matt Printz will serve the states of Colorado and Nebraska.

AngusSource, RFID — a perfect match

There are ongoing changes in the AngusSource program, which was

introduced in fall 2003. AngusSource is a marketing program that helps commercial producers receive a full return on their investments in Angus genetics. The AngusSource program helps differentiate Angus cattle from other black-hided cattle and provides a simple way for producers to convey source, genetic and management information to potential buyers. As the markets continue to move to a value-based structure and the number of branded beef programs grows, this information becomes increasingly important.

To enhance the program, we have added an electronic element to AngusSource. As the industry begins to identify more cattle electronically, and with a national identification (ID) system on the horizon, the new matched pair tag option containing a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag along with a visual tag was the logical step for the future of the program. AngusSource has been extremely successful to date, and we expect increased growth in the coming year.

National ID progresses

National ID continues to receive a lot of attention in the industry. As I visit with people, there seems to be a lot of myths and misconceptions floating around about how and when national ID will become a reality.

The Cattle Industry Working Group, consisting of representatives from all segments of the cattle industry, has been deliberating for more than a year to provide recommendations on standards and a timetable for implementation. Matt and Sara have served on the group, which recently submitted its recommendations to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for review. A basic overview of the recommendations follows.

The group recommends:

- use of RFID tags compliant with International Organization for Standardization (ISO);
- reporting of movement be required any time cattle are moved from a premises or commingled with other cattle;
- the premises receiving the cattle bear responsibility for reporting their movement;
- all producers be required to participate;
- confidentiality be maintained, ensuring no access to the records by any group or government agency (This issue still needs to be

resolved and is dependent upon data infrastructure.); and

- producers not bear the full cost of establishing or maintaining the system.

The group has suggested the following timeline for implementation of the system.

2004-2005 — Introduction

- Establish premises ID systems
- Educate and conduct outreach
- Conduct test strategies

2005-2006 — Infrastructure

- Establish information technology (IT) infrastructure
- Establish RFID reader infrastructure
- Set up tag distribution system
- ID cattle and report movements

2007 — Implementation

- Test analysis and validation of overall program
- Determine critical mass for program
- Required participation with government funding

The group recommends that Congress provide \$73 million in new funding for fiscal year (FY) 2005 to advance the program. The acceptance of these recommendations is now in the hands of the USDA and APHIS. The Information Technology Committee recently began conferencing again to work on recommendations for data infrastructure. Sara participates on this committee, as well. Bottom line, progress is being made, but implementation will not be as soon as some are predicting.

Stay informed

Although change is in the air at the American Angus Association, producers can stay informed about the latest changes and news by attending the National Angus Conference and Tour Sept. 14-17 in the Old Dominion state of Virginia. The conference portion will take place in Roanoke, with a great lineup of speakers. The two-day tour, hosted by the Virginia Angus Association, will combine stops at both registered and commercial operations. Participants will have an opportunity to see the beautiful countryside of Virginia and to visit some of the state's Civil War historical sites. It should prove to be a most informative and enjoyable event. Be sure to attend.