

American Angus Association unveils

Commercial Relations Department

New department strengthens the link between the Angus seedstock and commercial cow-calf industries.

Story by
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In February the American Angus Association Board of Directors took steps to improve the communication and relations between the Association and the commercial industry. With the introduction of the new commercial relations department, the Board hopes to increase the supply of cattle that meet *Certified Angus Beef*[™] qualifications and to help get information to commercial producers that will help them improve their genetics.

"It is my goal that the American Angus Association expand its horizons to become the breed association that can provide the programs, services and leadership to the commercial industry in order to integrate a common philosophy of beef production between registered seedstock producers and commercial cow-calf producers," says Director Bill Borrer, who chaired the committee charged with developing programs to improve relations with commercial producers. "The overriding goal of the committee was to improve the bottom-line economics of cow-calf producers

while providing a high-quality, consistent product to the consumer."

Bill Bowman, former regional manager, is leading the new department. Bowman says a key role of the department is to promote the difference of Angus-sired feeder calves vs. "black" feeder calves. He will monitor current price trends for various classes of known Angus-influenced cattle and provide this information to commercial producers. He in return will use the information to quantify the added value of Angus and promote it to the different segments of the beef industry. See Figure 1 for a complete list of department objectives.

Providing information

The department will facilitate information exchange between the various segments of the beef industry. One of the department's projects already in progress is ARC Net — The Angus Resource Clearinghouse Network. The service went online in August.

Bowman says ARC Net is a clearinghouse and information exchange designed to help producers communicate both breed identity and genetic her-

Figure 1: Commercial relations department objectives

1. Work with both seedstock and commercial producers, regardless of herd size, to develop marketing programs for commercial Angus and Angus-based cattle that will yield premiums for superior genetics.
2. Explore the development of a clearinghouse and information exchange to facilitate sales of commercial Angus and Angus-based cattle using all available media.
3. Monitor businesses that target Angus as part of their end-product marketing programs, and cooperate with these businesses in locating Angus cattle and marketing Angus beef.
4. Coordinate with Angus Productions Inc. to make the Angus Beef Bulletin more informative and more useful to commercial cattle producers.
5. Work with American Angus Association departments to organize programs that benefit commercial producers.
6. Maintain and enhance the image of the American Angus Association as a source of important economic information for commercial cattle operations.

itage of their cattle to potential buyers. Producers using Angus genetics can use ARC Net to list commercial cattle, feeder calves, stocker cattle or bred females for sale.

Buyers interested in Angus-sired cattle can check the ARC Net Web site, or the information can be mailed or faxed to interested parties on a regular basis.

Bowman is also putting together other resources to help commercial cattlemen market their Angus-based feeder calves. He is working with auction yards and video auction companies to develop "genetic identity" sales, instilling the importance of genetic history and data on past performance.

A challenge facing the department is how to help smaller, part-time producers who don't have the numbers to fill a truckload. Bowman is working with state associations to develop more Angus-influenced consignment sales.

The department is also accumulating a list of feedlots that are interested in Angus-sired calves, along with the services or options they provide. Currently, 90 feedlots are in the database, representing more than 1.5 million head total capacity. Bowman says the lots vary from small family feeders with 600-head capacities to commercial feedlots with 100,000-head, one-time capacities.

Another role Bowman sees the department taking is coordinating with the CAB Program supply development team to help channel Angus and Angus-based cattle into feedlots where they can be used most effectively and to inform packers of their availability.

He hopes to help producers get feedback on their genetics. "One of the biggest challenges facing the beef industry is getting more information back to the source of production," Bowman says. "In a perfect world, all commercial producers would be able to get feedback on their cattle's performance; in return they could make genetic and management adjustments to improve the product going into the industry."

Utilizing resources

Bowman hopes to work with seedstock producers and American Angus Association regional managers to promote the department and its services. He also hopes to work with regional managers to identify commercial herds of known genetic value and monitor the Angus genetics being used by these top herds.

The department's main communication vehicle will be the *Angus Beef Bulletin*. Bowman says through the *Bulletin* he hopes to provide commercial producers with the tools and information they need to receive premiums for their use of Angus genetics.

Improving the *Angus Beef Bulletin* was another priority of the American Angus Association Board of Directors. The improved *Bulletin* is printed on better paper, trimmed and perfect bound. With increased circulation, the new *Bulletin* reaches more commercial producers and key industry influencers — feedlots, auction markets, Extension personnel and university instructors. Beefing up the editorial content and percentage will allow the *Bulletin* to mail second class in the future, thus getting the information into the hands of the commercial producer sooner.

Other projects

Bowman will work with various Association departments to develop programs that benefit commercial producers. He will explore ways to assist commercial producers in recordkeeping procedures and to provide the recordkeeping options that exist in the industry.

As the department grows and programs expand, Bowman will continue to promote the goals of *The Angus Plan for 2000 and Beyond* and help commercial cattle producers incorporate these concepts into their operations.

