

Opportunity Knocks

Opportunity is knocking, but are you ready?

Story by
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Many commercial producers have been gathering information and building communication links to prepare for current changes in the beef industry. Their efforts allow them to meet the demands of their true customers — consumers.

Your opportunity lies within the largest carcass database of any breed through the Angus Sire Evaluation Program. Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program and

of cooperating test herds. Normally, around 200 bulls are available for testing each year. As a test herd owner, you would receive a performance pedigree on each potential test sire. Using that information, you could select the bull with genetics you believe most beneficial for your herd. Selection is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

You also have the opportunity to select the reference sires. A reference sire is defined as any sire that has been previously evaluated for progeny carcass merit. Reference sires are needed to tie new in-

You would have the option of retaining ownership through the finishing phase or marketing the cattle.

Commitment

Expect it to be a challenge. Keeping track of calves from birth to harvest isn't always easy. It requires a strong commitment on your part, as the test herd owner, to make sure the buyer of the calves also knows about the program and is willing to follow the guidelines during finishing and to have carcass data collected. While retained ownership facilitates data collection, it is not required or necessary.

Opportunities

If you are willing to make a commitment to the Sire Evaluation Program, the benefits can be very worthwhile. Test herd owners can expect to gain valuable carcass information on their cattle and much more.

You will have the opportunity to retain or market high-quality replacement females sired by bulls with the genetics you have chosen.

"By testing bulls of certain bloodlines that show strong carcass data, I am putting their daughters into my herd, therefore increasing my total herd carcass base," says Bob Fastje, Wilsall, Mont.

Ray Gilbert, Gilbert Angus Ranch, Buffalo, S.D., says he has seen an improvement in the maternal and progeny carcass traits of his cow herd through his participation in the Sire Evaluation Program.

In addition, you will receive carcass information on all of the calves at no expense. Carcass data is proving to be an indispensable marketing tool in today's cattle business. Whether you're marketing your calves at weaning or retaining ownership, carcass information on your herd serves as a predictor of your cattle's performance.

"After three years of data, we are now confident that when we retain ownership and sell on a grid, we will receive a premium for the carcass," says Gene Harris from Harris Ranch, Killdeer, N.D.

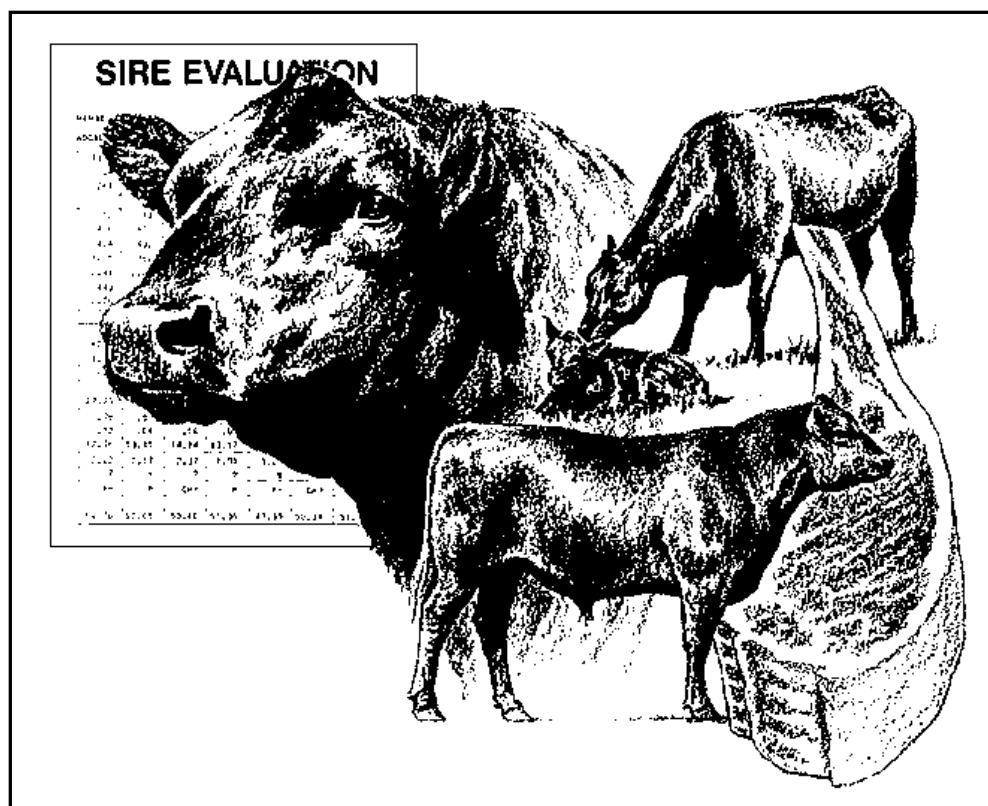
Get involved

Why should you get involved now? Because the industry is moving toward value-based marketing;

For more information



To learn more about how you can become involved in the Sire Evaluation Program, contact Ron Bolze (left), CAB Program director of progeny tests for carcass merit, at (785) 462-6404 or John Crouch (right), American Angus Association director of performance programs, at (816) 383-5100.



American Angus Association staffs are standing by to help you grasp this opportunity.

To date, progeny carcass data have been recorded on more than 1,775 Angus sires. This information is used to establish the expected progeny differences (EPDs) included in the *Sire Evaluation Report* published by the American Angus Association each spring and fall. Currently, 49 of the top 50 bulls used, according to calf registrations, have been evaluated and have carcass EPDs.

Program details

The Sire Evaluation Program's success relies on the participation

formation to the existing American Angus Association database.

Under ideal circumstances, enough cows would be randomly mated to allow for the evaluation of at least 25 steer progeny by the test sire and a combined total of at least 20 steer progeny by two reference sires. If steer numbers fall short, heifer counterparts may be used.

Responsibilities include maintaining individual calf identity and records and keeping the calves together in a contemporary group. Calves that are the same sex, raised together with equal treatment, fed and harvested together would constitute a contemporary group.

and if your cattle aren't performing to your expectations today, how soon will they? While the poultry and pork industries can change their genetics in a matter of months, it will be the year 2001 before progeny of sires involved in this year's test will be evaluated.

"As the industry turns toward value-based marketing, this is the kind of program we have to be in," says Darrel Smith from Atkinson, Neb.

"I still think there are producers who are not aware of the program and could benefit from being involved. They need to know: one, you don't have to retain ownership; two, you get to pick the bulls you use; and three, you get the information free of charge," says Harris.

For contact names and more information about becoming a cooperating test herd, please refer to the *Building Tomorrow Together* brochure included in this issue.

