



Up Front

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

A preview of year-end numbers

As I write this column, it is almost the first of September and difficult to realize that summer is nearly over. The rains have been good in Saint Joseph, and harvest and a hint of autumn fill the air. It is a great time to live in the Midwest and to be involved in the Angus business.

Normally I would refrain from writing about business until the end of the fiscal year. However, by the time final year-end results appear in print, it will be near Thanksgiving. So if you will indulge me, I will share some observations regarding our business in fiscal year (FY) 2004 somewhat ahead of schedule.

Advancing the breed

The lifeblood of any breed association is the number of new cattle registered in the herd book on an annual basis. For the first 10 months of our fiscal year, Angus registrations were at 259,815, a 5.5% increase from the same period last year. Of this number, 23,444 calves were the result of embryo transfer (ET), representing an 8.3% increase. Likewise, transfers of registered Angus to new owners increased by 10.2%. The number of new members joining the Association this year is up by 13%.

Participation in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program

continues to increase in number of performance items processed and the number of herds enrolled. The big performance gainer was a 10% increase in ultrasound measures for body composition and an 11% increase in herds participating for the first 10 months of the year.

I never cease to be amazed at the increasing number of transactions transmitted electronically. Since a large portion of our membership has computers, it is reasonable that more than 50% of registrations and more than 60% of performance data are received through the Internet via Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) and AAA Login.

Demand for Angus

The demand for Angus seedstock has been overwhelming.

Periodically, the *Western Livestock Journal* (WLJ) surveys its readers relative to size, scope and type of operation, as well as to the number and breed of the bulls they buy. Its general reader profile indicates that about 90% of its readers own or manage a beef cattle operation and about 88% are cow-calf operators. These readers use an average of 17.5 bulls and replace 4.2% annually. Seventy-five percent say they travel from 100 to 499 miles to buy their bulls.

When asked what elements

influenced their buying decisions, results showed:

- 84% said calving ease;
- 74.8% said growth traits;
- 69.3% said breeder reputation;
- 57.4% said cost;
- 56.1% said carcass;
- 54.4% said maternal traits;
- 42.1% said pedigree; and
- 37.4% said color.

In the end, 68.8% of the WLJ readers surveyed said they were using Angus bulls. So if color only influences slightly more than one-third of these decisions, and if 68.8% of those same producers are using Angus bulls, their decisions are obviously not based on color alone, but rather on the traits that have bearing on bottom-line economics. The survey clearly points out that buyers surveyed prefer Angus to other black-hided bulls.

In addition to breeder reputation and cost, commercial bull buyers continue to be drawn to excellence in calving ease, early growth, maternal value and end product merit. These genetic attributes have been, and will continue to be, the very cornerstones of Angus genetics. The only way a commercial stockman can be sure is through the purchase of a registered Angus bull.



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