



THE ANGUS LINK

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Preparing for the future

The American Angus Association is committed to being a source of valuable programs, services and information for the beef industry. The performance data generated from the information sent in by registered Angus breeders provides commercial producers using Angus genetics accurate and predictable expected progeny differences (EPDs) for genetic selection to improve their programs.

The Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program now includes more than 8 million weight records that back the nearly 5,800 sires appearing in the current Angus Sire Evaluation Report. With more data than any other beef breed association in the world, we want to continue to expand the Association as an information source, broadening the Angus influence in a changing beef industry.

Still, a void has existed for a system to incorporate information on Angus genetics used in the commercial industry.

Angus Beef Record Service

The Association's Board of Directors took an innovative step during its September 1999 meeting by approving the development of the Angus Beef Record Service (BRS). This service will represent an expansion of the AHIR program, providing a mechanism for commercial producers to keep performance records on their animals. Those records can in turn be used as a valuable decision-making tool to enhance profitability.

The Angus BRS will storehouse information on a producer's cow herd, including breed composition, sire information, breeding information, calving data and any performance or carcass data collected on a calf. Initially, production data will be analyzed, weights adjusted and reports returned on the information. We also intend to develop genetic predictions (estimated dollar differences) for the cattle in terms of reproduction, growth and end-product value using the actual data submitted, while also tying to the Angus database where possible.

Many producers I visit with have begun to accumulate mountains of data from their programs, but they may be at a loss on how to make good use of the information.

There are excellent recordkeeping systems already available in the beef industry, many of

which are extremely valuable tools. The Angus BRS, however, will provide a unique opportunity to characterize the commercial producers' cattle by tying to the 40 years of performance data maintained by the American Angus Association.

The Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) package, currently used by registered Angus breeders, also will be adapted for use by commercial producers. Additionally, in most circumstances data may be submitted from any other software package into the Angus BRS.

A tool for serious producers

This data will help characterize the commercial cow herds using Angus genetics, providing information and analysis on an individual cow, cow group and entire herd basis. Collecting data and tying that information back to an individual cow or to a group of a particular sire's daughters make it possible to base decisions on fact rather than assumption. Cattle producers must utilize all available information to remain competitive in today's industry. Keeping records is a necessity in today's world!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) collected data from beef cow-calf operations and summarized that data in the NAHMS Beef '97 Study. One of the most eye-opening statistics from this comprehensive study was the fact that only 11.7% of the herds culled cows for poor production reasons.

Eliminating the variability in our industry continues to be a serious concern, and individual cattle management has the potential to become a real improvement tool to enhance profit. For example, the culling of those females from a herd that are prone to produce Yield Grade (YG) 4 or 5 carcasses or the cow that consistently produces a calf with a 20% lighter weaning weight are simple steps that can improve profitability.

Bottom line: Improving the pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed at breeding is a crucial economic factor in a profitable operation. Accomplishing this by increasing the number of calves weaned while simultaneously increasing weaning weights requires collecting

the information and analyzing the factors to make improvements. The Angus BRS will help make these decisions.

Linking end product to the producing factory

As value-based marketing continues to become more of a realization in the beef industry, the ability to tie the production sector to the end product becomes not only important from an information standpoint, but it also becomes extremely relevant from a profit standpoint. Whether you are selling feeder calves at weaning or retaining finished cattle to harvest, more and more information is required by potential buyers in order for you to acquire top prices.

Source verification of cattle is the next big step in capturing more value for your production. For example, going to an auction to sell your calves with a complete set of genetic, management and health records, along with any historical data on feedlot performance or carcass data, is going to become a necessity. The Angus BRS will be a tool to help producers relate that information in a usable format on cattle produced in their herds.

Also, on the source-verification and data-capture process, new technology — such as electronic identification (EID) — will become an important tool in tracing cattle from the ranch of origin through the packing segment and relaying that information back to the producer. The Angus BRS will have the capability to maintain a national ID system and EID numbers that will be used by the industry in the near future.

Identifying genetics that work

One of the more exciting aspects of the Angus BRS is the potential to identify Angus sires, previously lost, that can make a valuable contribution to the Angus breed. In fiscal year (FY) 1999 alone, more than 40,000 Angus bulls were transferred to nonmember buyers. These bulls represent some of the top genetics available in the Angus breed, but we accumulate little, if any, progeny data on these bulls. One can site instances when a bull that has done a good job in a commercial herd may be "found" and used once again in a

registered program. The Angus BRS will facilitate the evaluation of bulls used in commercial programs that currently may go undetected through the beef industry.

Getting started

The Angus BRS should be ready to enroll

herds on Feb. 1. Producers may contact the Association to obtain an enrollment form and a set of guidelines further explaining the service. There is no charge to enroll your cow herd in the program, but a \$2/head charge will be assessed for each calf weaning weight processed through the Angus BRS.

If you have any questions on the program, contact the Commercial Relations Department or the AIMS Department at (816) 383-5100.



LOOKING FOR A BULL?
Check out ARCNet's Bull Listing Service

Another new service provided as part of the Angus Resource Clearinghouse Network (ARCNet) is the Bull Listing Service (BLS). Commercial producers looking for specific Angus genetics can now search a database of registered Angus bulls for sale, while defining expected-progeny-difference (EPD) criteria, sire groups and even location.

Angus breeders may purchase a listing for their registered Angus bulls for sale on the BLS, which appears on the Internet as part of the ARCNet site. The BLS can be found on the Internet at www.angus.org.

Follow the links for ARCNet or the Bull Listing Service to access the search form. If you do not have access to the Internet, feel free to call our office for assis-

tance. This service will provide the commercial cow-calf producer looking for specific seedstock another tool to help locate Angus bulls for their operations.



