

ANGUS

BEEF BULLETIN

"The Commercial Cattleman's Angus Connection"

Volume 18, Number 3 • September 2003



PHOTOS BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

Features & News

A program designed for commercial producers is boosting bottom lines. 1

Producers are invited to attend the 2003 National Angus Conference and Tour Sept. 24-27 in Mandan, N.D. 10

Pasture weaning keeps calves calmer and healthier. 21

Tory Borell is willing to give up a few cents on yield grade to capture the Prime premium. 26

Premier partners represent CAB ideals. . . 34

The cost of liver flukes shows up in lost performance and reduced carcass weight. 42

Column Links

- Association Highlights 15
- Commercial Relations Department . . . 17
- Angus-Influence Sales. 18
- Here's the Premium 29
- Certified Angus Beef LLC 30
- Veterinary Link 37
- Angus Sales 44
- Advertiser Index 52

Staff

- Angus Productions Inc. 4
- American Angus Association 16
- Certified Angus Beef LLC 31
- Regional Managers 50

Services

- *Angus Journal* subscription form 23
- American Angus Association membership form 50

On the 'Net

www.angusbeefbulletin.com
www.angusproductions.com
www.angusjournal.com
www.angus.org
www.certifiedangusbeef.com

The most current listing of Angus sales and events is available online at www.angusalmanac.com

Sale reports are available online at www.angusproductions.com/api_salering_set.html

Both are searchable by breeder, location and date.

Beef Record Service — It Can Work for You

A program designed for commercial producers is boosting bottom lines.

Story by **HOLLY FOSTER**

No matter the size of your operation, there is something to be said for good recordkeeping. But, without analysis or interpretation, all of the records in the world will not give you information; they simply give you data. There is a big difference.

Turner Callaway is a seventh-generation cattle producer from Rayle, Ga. He has been involved for several years in the Georgia Beef Challenge, a program organized by the

University of Georgia Extension and Iowa State University (ISU). The alliance pairs southeastern cattle producers with Iowa feeders in a cooperative that also provides marketing and risk management assistance.



"Marketing opportunities, like the one I'm involved in, generate a lot of numbers, but you can be snowed under by all of the data," Callaway says. "For me, Beef Record Service (BRS) has helped put it all together."

Launched in September 2001 by the American Angus Association, the BRS

program was developed for commercial producers to keep similar levels of performance data as their seedstock counterparts, no matter the breed composition of their cattle.

"These records are meant to be valuable decision-making tools to enhance ranchers' profitability," says Matt Perrier, director of commercial programs for the Association. "Once producers submit their data, not only do they get within herd comparisons, but the data are also analyzed with Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) methods. This lets producers make selection decisions on their cow

(Continued on page 4)

Beef Record Service (from page 1)

“Purebred breeders have had access to performance data for years, but there wasn’t a good option for commercial producers until BRS came along. Most purebred breeders understand how little progress could have been made without this kind of data. More commercial producers need to realize that the same holds true for their cattle.”

— Turner Callaway

herds and adds to the ability to market their calf crops.”
 “With the bad drought we had last year, using the BRS system made it a lot easier for me to make selection decisions,” says Dan Doerr, a producer from northeast Nebraska. “After getting my BRS reports back, I could easily tell which cows were pulling their weight.”



The primary strength of the program is realized in its ability to identify lower-producing cows and to allow a producer to select for the cattle that are more profitable, says Matt Perrier, director of commercial programs for the American Angus Association. (PHOTO BY STEPHANIE VELDMAN)

According to Perrier, that is the primary strength of the program — it allows a producer to select for the cattle that are making money. The individual record system, combined with the SPA analysis, identifies lower-producing cows. For operations that raise their own replacements, progeny from the superior cows can go back into the herd. The same ability to identify superior genetics holds true for bulls or sire groups.

These benefits, however, are not necessarily immediate.

Mounting benefits

“One calf crop’s raw data can be interesting to analyze, but it’s the second, third and fourth years’ information on each cow and sire that enables a producer to make sound selection and management decisions,” Perrier says.

A long-term commitment is tantamount to deriving the most benefit from BRS and SPA. Jim McGrann, Texas A&M Extension economist, says SPA is not an event, it’s a process that requires the producer to follow up and use the information to make changes. McGrann has been involved with approximately 500 SPA evaluations during the past 10 years, and says, “I have never had a producer say it was

not a valuable exercise.”

Doerr is beginning his fourth year of submitting records to the BRS program and is more than pleased with the information he gets back.

“We have been selling cattle on a grid for the last 10 years, but it wasn’t until I started analyzing that information with BRS that I realized we really needed to increase our ribeye area to improve profitability,” Doerr adds.

“Beef Record Service has helped us make the bridge from data to information,” says Don Katzenmeyer, who with his wife, Carole, operates a small commercial operation near Portland, Ore., and manages another herd. “It is always good to have an objective opinion. How else do you know if you are moving in the direction you want?”

Of course, getting started with the program may not be seamless, but the efforts have been paying off. “I can tell you down to the penny what it costs to raise a cow,” Doerr says. “With this analysis, I can really select for profitability. For example, the first couple of years that I was enrolled, it opened my eyes to how much it costs to carry over open cows.”

Callaway also enrolled almost as soon as BRS became available. “As with any new system, there were a couple of initial snags,” he says, “but the staff at the Angus Association has set the gold standard for customer service. Everyone was extremely easy to work with and knowledgeable.”

BRS continues to be refined and updated to better meet the needs of commercial producers.

In fact, if you have been keeping most of the necessary records (individual production data) in another software format, it is likely that you can submit it for analysis. The Commercial Programs Department staff at the Association can convert data from nearly any spreadsheet or database program and transform it into a format usable in BRS, Perrier says.

Who should enroll?

The one thing that all of these early adopters of BRS understood

(Continued on page 6)



All the carcass premiums in the world won’t make up for a cow that isn’t pulling her weight in reproductive efficiency, says Minnie Lou Bradley, who offers to pay half of the initial BRS enrollment for her customers.

AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION, 3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997; (816) 383-5100; fax: (816) 233-9703; e-mail: angus@angus.org. ANGUS BEEF BULLETIN (USPS 019428) (ISSN 1524-8488) is published four times per year by Angus Productions Inc., 3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997. Periodicals postage paid at Saint Joseph, MO 64501, and at additional post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ANGUS BEEF BULLETIN, 3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997.

Founded March 1985
ANGUS
BEEF BULLETIN
 “The Commercial Cattleman’s Angus Connection”

Produced and published by Angus Productions Inc. in cooperation with the American Angus Association and Certified Angus Beef LLC.

3201 Frederick Ave. • Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997
 phone: (816) 383-5200 • fax: (816) 233-6575
 office hours: (M-F) 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (Central time)
 Web site: www.angusbeefbulletin.com

Staff are listed by name, phone extension and e-mail prefix. All direct phone numbers are “(816) 383-5...”; all e-mail addresses are “...@angusjournal.com”

General manager – Terry Cotton, 214, tcotton

Editorial Department

Editor – Shauna Rose Hermel, 270, shermel;
Assistant editors – Corinne Blender, 277, cblender; Stephanie Veldman, 215, sveldman;
Artists – Christy Benigno & Mary Black;
Proofreader – Crystal Albers

Field editors

Kindra Gordon, PO Box 645, Spearfish, SD 57783, (605) 722-7699, kindras@gordonresources.com;
Janet Mayer, 259 Mile Hill Rd., Johnstown, PA 15909, (814) 322-4687, jmayer5013@aol.com;
Becky Mills, Rt. 1, Box 414, Cuthbert, GA 31740, (229) 732-6748, lovettmills@alltel.net; &
Troy Smith, HC 72, Box 18A, Sargent, NE 68874, (308) 527-3483; wordsmith@nctc.net

Contributing writers

Holly Foster, Kim Kanzler Holt

Advertising/Production Department

Manager – Cheryl Oxley, 216, coxley;
Advertising assistants – Doneta Brown, 289, dbrown; & Rich Masoner, 223, rmasoner;
Production assistant – Carol Beckett, 226, cbeckett; **Advertising artists** – Susan Bomar, Mike Bush & Monica Ford; **Advertising proofreader** – Jacque McGinness

Special Services Department

Coordinator – Sharon Mayes, 221, smayes; **Artist** – Janet Herkelman; **Assistant** – Vickie Whitsell;
Proofreader – Linda Robbins

Web Marketing Department

Director – Angie Stump Denton, 211, adenton;
Assistants – Tonya Shinn, 239, tshinn; & Tanya Peebles, 234, tpeebles; **Artist** – Ray Palermo

Photo Department

Coordinator – Donna Conley, 217, dconley;
Digital imaging specialist – Kathrin Gresham

Circulation coordinator – LaVera Spire, 220, lspirer

Network systems coordinator – Bruce Buntin

Office assistant – Lauralee West

Angus Productions Inc. Board of Directors

Chairman – Joe Elliot
Vice chairman – John Crouch
President – Terry Cotton
Business manager – Richard Wilson
Directors – Keith Arntzen, Mark Gardiner, Jot Hartley, Paul Hill, Jay King & Abbie Nelson



Beef Record Service (from page 4)

was the value of keeping good records. All had been keeping extensive production information on their herds, but simply wanted a better and easier way to analyze their records.

"Purebred breeders have had access to performance data for years, but there wasn't a good option for commercial producers until BRS came along," Callaway says. "Most

purebred breeders understand how little progress could have been made without this kind of data. More commercial producers need to realize that the same holds true for their cattle."

For anyone thinking about enrolling in BRS, Katzenmeyer has a few recommendations, including having a good identification (ID) system. He says not to procrastinate on turning in your data. In other words, don't submit data only once or twice a year, but rather each time an event (such as weaning) takes place.

To start your herd on BRS, here is what you will need:

- **Customer Enrollment Form.** You can access this at www.beefrecords.com or contact the Association office. Once you are enrolled in BRS, you can submit and view information online, or you can fill out paper forms.
- **Cattle Enrollment Forms.** Input information on individual dams and sires.
- **Breeding Report.** This report allows you to outline which cows were bred to which bulls or, if you use multi-sire pastures, to submit that information as a sire group.
- **Calving and Weaning Report.** This is critical for evaluating preweaning performance, and it allows you to submit cow data such as weight, height and body condition score (BCS). Disposal codes for cows are also used to track cow longevity.
- **Yearling, Feedlot and Carcass Reports.** If you have the information available, you can

also submit information for postweaning traits.

Once you submit your data, it is analyzed, and comprehensive within-herd comparisons are provided.

Fringe benefits

Increasing the efficiency of your selection decisions should be your primary reason for enrolling in BRS, but there may also be some fringe benefits.

Many producers concerned with requirements for the new country-of-origin labeling (often referred to as COOL or COL) law, have questioned whether BRS would fulfill the need for a verifiable audit trail.

"The mandatory guidelines are still being written and refined by the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS), but the current thinking and discussions lead us to believe that calves processed through the Beef Record Service should have more than enough information about the calves' location of birth, thus satisfying that portion of the country-of-origin labeling regulations," Perrier says. "Until we have more information from USDA, though, we can't be sure of what will or won't qualify."

BRS also has the potential to be a good marketing tool for seedstock producers. Minnie Lou Bradley, an Association Board member and longtime proponent of SPA, is hoping to involve some of her commercial bull customers in the program.

"I want my customers to be profitable, but many of them don't realize just where their operations stand until they become involved in


a system like BRS," Bradley says. "For anybody to do a good job, they have to keep individual records." As an incentive, Bradley is offering to pay half of the first year's enrollment fee.

Bradley, founder of B3R Country Meats LP, says many of her commercial bull customers market their calves through the alliance. Individual carcass data is being returned to those producers, but Bradley thinks everyone should realize that all the premiums in the world won't make up for a cow that isn't pulling her weight in reproductive efficiency.

While there may be some potential as a seedstock producer to get data back on her bulls, Bradley will not require her customers to share data if enrolled in BRS through her incentive program.

"We are all searching for the 'best bull in the breed.' That bull is likely out breeding commercial cows in a five-section pasture," Perrier says, "and we would never know how good he really is. With a program like BRS, we might be able to find him."

No matter how you look at it, a better understanding of the true economic picture of your operation is the only way to improve profitability. "After getting involved in BRS, I saw how much easier the system made it for me to select for profitability," Doerr says. "I can tell which cows are making me more money."



"Beef Record Service has helped us make the bridge from data to information."

— Don Katzenmeyer

"With the bad drought we had last year, using the BRS system made it a lot easier for me to make selection decisions."

— Dan Doerr

Understanding Standardized Performance Analysis

You have always been told you can't compare apples to oranges. That couldn't be more true when trying to evaluate your cattle and your business. That was the primary reason Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) was developed more than 10 years ago by the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) [now the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA)] Integrated Resource Management (IRM) Committee. A group of industry leaders recognized a lack of standardized methods for performance analysis in the cow-calf industry.

"The objective of SPA is to help producers achieve their goals by effectively analyzing their production and financial performances," says Jim McGrann, Texas A&M Extension economist. "SPA focuses on determining the cost of the weaned calf per cow exposed. A key aspect of the program is to identify ways to lower the cost of production through cost-effective management while practicing resource stewardship."

In addition to the production data that Beef Record Service (BRS) provides, you will need to provide some financial information to get a complete SPA analysis. McGrann recommends the following:

- Loan payment schedule
- Financial statements
- Cattle sales and purchases for the fiscal year

Putting this financial information together with the production data provided by BRS can create some powerful decision-making tools. According to data summarizing cow-calf SPA results for 395 Southwest herds with 285,000 cows from 1991 to 2001, \$238 is being given up by the low-net-income-producing herds vs. their more efficient counterparts. Cost of production between these two sectors ranges from \$321 to \$559, McGrann says.

"For these operations to be cost-competitive, producers need to strive to keep production cost under \$350 per breeding cow. This is a full cost of production, including all cash costs, depreciation, and labor and management costs," McGrann says.

The analyses will let you see the history of your operation's performance, objectively evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and provide a clear picture of where you can go to improve performance.