

Movin' Forward



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The great leap forward

Much of the discussion at the recent Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) meeting was devoted to advances in DNA-based technologies

(www.bifconference.com/newsroom.html). For instance, several presentations were given on the incorporation of DNA data into dairy genetic evaluation and the

enhanced accuracy and precision this technology is providing that industry.

For me, it was eye-opening to see research results that showed accuracy levels for dairy marker-assisted expected progeny differences (EPDs) in the 0.60 range on non-parent animals. There's no doubt that DNA technology is going to rapidly shorten the generation interval in the dairy business, accelerating the rate of genetic change.

There's also no doubt that we will see the same rapid developments in the beef business, and many of the speakers at the BIF meeting underscored the fact that the Angus breed now stands at the forefront in these advancements.

Standing a leader

In March 2006, the American Angus Association began discussions on how DNA technology would affect our business, and how we needed to position our breed and organization to shape its development for the advantage of all Angus breeders.

Following establishment of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) in June 2007, we have worked closely with DNA companies and the research community to make possible the inclusion of DNA markers into national cattle evaluation (NCE).

These efforts came to fruition mid-July when AGI announced a partnership with Merial. The partnership — the only one of its kind in the U.S. industry today — will provide Angus breeders with an Angus-specific panel that is available exclusively through AGI and the Association (See "AGI, Igenity® to Introduce Genomic-enhanced EPDs" on page 6).

This is a substantial economic advantage for Angus cattle, because it means that Angus breeders and their customers are now equipped with some of the most powerful genetic-improvement tools in the business. Coupling DNA with our existing cattle evaluation program will make it easier and more efficient to move more rapidly and accurately in our genetic-improvement efforts.

The coupling of Igenity technology with Angus NCE will result in higher-accuracy EPDs, especially for younger, unproven cattle.

This is great news for the Angus business. It is a partnership that will further advance the economic interests and the market strength of Angus genetics across the country.

It is also a partnership that will benefit small-, medium- and large-scale producers equally, enabling all of our members to select for more desirable genetic attributes in a much more rapid and accurate way.