



The Angus Link

by **JIM SHIRLEY**, director of commercial programs and vice president of industry relations, American Angus Association

Irons in the fire

My mother always said, "I don't know where the time has gone." She was a remarkable woman and always had more irons in the fire than one person could handle, but she always managed to get it all done. She also said that the older she got, the faster time seemed to go. I think most farmers and ranchers know what she meant. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2002 Census of Agriculture had some interesting data that confirms my mother's thoughts.

According to the census, the number of beef operations fell by more than 103,000 from 1997 to 2002. The census also stated that the average age of producers was 55.3 years and rising, and labor was the fastest-growing expense of beef producers. Now, this tells me that cattlemen are advancing in age, and they are doing more with less help. No wonder trouble-free cattle are in demand in the industry today.

Another survey that confirms this is one conducted by the *Western Livestock Journal* (WLJ), which conducts a bull survey every three years. One of the topics in the last survey was "Elements That Influence Bull-Buying Decisions." Calving ease was the No. 1 desired trait by more than 84% of those surveyed.

Keep it real

It is no wonder that calving-ease Angus bulls have been so popular, and rightfully so. But I think that we may have passed up some opportunities to use some really good Angus genetics because bulls were perceived as carrying too much birth weight.

There is no doubt that the age of the female plays a major role in difficult births. A study indicated that 15% of first-calf heifers have calving difficulty and only 1.5% of second-calf and older females have difficult births. This leads me to believe that cows can be expected to have heavier calves than heifers, without difficulty.

Researchers at the Roman L. Hruska Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) at Clay Center, Neb., develop breed adjustment factors annually so that expected progeny difference (EPD)

values can be compared across breeds. This allows animals of various breeds to be compared on the same EPD scale after adding the specific adjustment factors to EPDs produced in the most recent genetic evaluations of the

respective breeds. This process allows the estimation of across-breed EPDs, sometimes referred to as AB-EPDs (see Table 1).

The example in Table 2 illustrates EPDs for Angus and Simmental bulls after across-breed adjustment factors have been applied to estimate AB-EPDs. The AB-EPDs for Simmental Bull #002 are on an Angus-equivalent scale and can be directly compared with values for Angus Bull #001.

This information is in the front of the American Angus Association *Sire Evaluation Report*. You can read more about it there, or you can find the information online at www.angus.org by clicking on Performance-

AHIR and then the Sire Evaluation Report. My point is that there are some really good Angus bulls that are considered heavier birth weight bulls that are actually lighter in birth weight than bulls of other breeds being used

successfully with no or very little calving difficulty. Why limit the use of these bulls just because they are not considered heifer bulls in the Angus breed? Many will work on cows with excellent results.

Many of you may have seen the newest addition to the American Angus Association's \$Value Indexes. \$Values are multi-trait selection indexes expressed in dollars per head to assist beef producers by adding simplicity to genetic selection.

Just as with EPDs, variation in \$Values between animals indicates average expected differences in the relative value of progeny of different Angus sires. Feedlot Value (\$F) is the expected average difference in future progeny performance for postweaning performance compared to the progeny of other sires. Grid Value (\$G) is the expected average difference in future progeny performance for grid merit compared to progeny of other sires. Beef Value (\$B) is the combination of \$F and \$G with adjustments for weight.

\$F, \$G and \$B are not to be used as single-trait selection tools since they only measure postweaning growth and carcass merit and do not account for reproductive or preweaning genetic differences. Once again, more detailed information is available in the *Sire Evaluation Report* or online at www.angus.org. The Spring 2005 National Cattle Evaluation (NCE) will feature the newest index to be released — the Weaned Calf \$Value (\$W). This

new \$Value considers the following four primary economic impact areas:

- Birth weight and calf death loss adjustments to cow profitability;
- Weaning weight revenue and expenses;
- Maternal milk; and
- Mature cow size expense adjustments.

\$W provides the expected dollar-per-head difference in future progeny performance preweaning in a multi-trait fashion, with the cow herd as a priority.

Also, a Cow Energy Value (\$EN) will be available in the spring 2005 *Sire Evaluation Report*. \$EN will assess differences in cow energy requirements, expressed in dollars per cow per year, as an expected savings difference in future daughters of sires. Adjustments for computing the cow \$EN savings difference include maintenance requirements for lactation, not just mature size. \$EN is an additional tool for breeders wanting to fine-tune herd maintenance attributes in their breeding programs.

Don't forget to tag

I want to remind all commercial producers about the AngusSource program. It is a tagging and marketing program that gives prospective buyers source, genetic and process information about their Angus-sired calves. AngusSource is the simplest, most flexible program to help you

There are some really good Angus bulls considered heavier birth weight bulls that are actually lighter in birth weight than bulls of other breeds being used successfully with no or very little calving difficulty.

Table 1: 2004 additive adjustment factors to estimate across-breed EPDs

Breed	BW	WW	Milk	YW
Angus	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hereford	3.4	-2.0	-17.8	-13.7
Red Angus	3.6	-1.4	-7.8	0.7
Shorthorn	7.8	31.4	12.1	44.5
South Devon	6.7	21.7	3.5	40.8
Brahman	13.0	34.8	24.6	-4.4
Limousin	4.5	1.8	-15.9	-19.9
Simmental	6.4	22.4	10.0	21.9
Charolais	10.5	38.4	2.6	53.4
Gelbvieh	5.4	7.1	1.7	-21.1
Maine Anjou	6.7	17.6	7.6	5.5
Salers	4.9	30.7	9.0	46.1
Pinzgauer	7.7	28.3	6.1	25.5
Tarentaise	3.6	30.1	17.8	13.4
Braunvieh	6.5	30.0	22.2	13.9
Brangus	5.7	20.0	—	20.4
Beefmaster	9.7	39.0	—	37.9

Source: Van Vleck and Cundiff, 2004 BIF Proceedings, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Table 2: Example of using across-breed adjustment factors to convert noncomparable within-breed EPDs to comparable across-breed EPDs

		BW	WW	Milk	YW
Angus	AB adj. factors ^a :	0.0	0	0	0
Bull #001	EPDs ^b :	2.9	42	16	83
	AB-EPDs ^c :	2.9	42	16	83
Simmental	AB adj. factors:	6.4	22	10	22
Bull #002	EPDs:	0.8	31	7	59
	AB-EPDs:	7.2	53	17	81

^aAB adj. factors are the across-breed adjustment factors from Table 1.

^bEPDs are the within-breed EPD values from the breed's genetic evaluation for the bull of interest.

^cAcross-breed EPDs after adjustment factors are applied to within-breed EPDs.

SUBSCRIPTION REQUEST

Please enter my subscription for 12 issues of the *Angus Journal*.



3201 Frederick Ave.
 Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997
 (816) 383-5220
 E-mail: lspire@angusjournal.com

- \$50 for one year (U.S.)
- \$80 for one year (Canada) (*Payable in U.S. funds*)
- \$125 for one year (Foreign) (*Payable in U.S. funds*)

Name

Address

City

State

ZIP

receive true value for your Angus-sired feeder calves and replacement females. There are three easy steps to follow to participate in the program.

1. Enroll

Fill out the enrollment form.

Producers enrolling calves must have calves sired by registered Angus bulls that are in their ownership in American Angus Association records.

2. Tag

Choose a tag option. Costs are \$1 per head for the visual tag or \$3.25 per matched pair [radio frequency identification (RFID) electronic tag and visual tag].

Tags should be placed only in calves sired by registered Angus bulls prior to shipment from the farm or ranch of origin.

3. Market

Create a marketing profile, including information about the group's vaccination and management procedures, marketing location and date.

Print an official AngusSource marketing profile. Present this document to potential buyers and auction markets to show them the value of your Angus-sired cattle.

Cattle will be listed on the AngusSource marketing site for 90 days prior to the marketing date. The listing will also be sent to more than 400 potential buyers via e-mail.

AngusSource cattle may be marketed through livestock auction markets, video auctions or direct from the farm or ranch of origin.

To participate in the program, either go to www.angussource.com and log in, or call the Commercial Programs Department of the American Angus Association at (816) 383-5100.

I know that you are busy, and I know that, like my mother, you have lots of irons in the fire. But if you are serious about receiving true value for your Angus-sired cattle, it would be well worth your time to investigate AngusSource.

