

The Source

by **GINETTE KURTZ**, *American Angus Association*



There are many tools available to commercial cattlemen to increase profitability.

If you are a commercial cattleman, we want to know your opinion. Now is your opportunity to be heard!

The *Angus Beef Bulletin* staff has put together a list of questions to learn more about your operation and its needs. Registered-Angus bulls are enjoying one of the best markets in history. The market for those calves isn't bad, either. It takes more work to be a profitable producer today than it ever has in the past. Input costs will continue to be a factor while the market decides where it wants to be at a given time.

We want you to be a successful commercial cattle producer who uses quality Angus genetics. What information or services will assist you in the coming year to help you keep your competitive edge? Take a moment and fill out the survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/CommercialSurvey0115. If you are one of the first 250 respondents, you will receive a free pair of AngusSource® roping gloves.

Technology can be a steep learning curve for producers who raise livestock or crops. Technology is moving at a rapid pace, and sometimes it is difficult to

figure out if it will pay back the start-up cost. An example would be automatic planter shutoffs. They are expensive, and they require a decent GPS signal — at least ours does — and someone who can figure out how to set it up correctly. However, the savings are incredible.

Seed is expensive. It doesn't matter if you are planting corn or soybeans. When you double-plant the end rows, you are wasting seed and you are decreasing your yields. A planter set up with shutoffs will pay you back. How quickly you get paid back depends on the number of acres covered.

Commercial cattlemen who use registered-Angus bulls that produce high-quality, black-hided calves have been seeing unprecedented prices. Many factors have kept the market heading to those all-time highs. Progressive commercial producers have really moved the bar higher by giving potential buyers more data and information to help base their buying decisions.

Angus tools available

Commercial programs is an important

part of the American Angus Association. Let's run through some of the offering.

Feeder-calf sale day is your once-a-year payday. **AngusSource®** or **AngusSource Genetic** can be a great vehicle to inform potential buyers just how genetically superior your calf crop is compared to other black-hided calves.

The backbone of AngusSource and AngusSource Genetic is the **Marketing Document**. The producer decides when and where he or she plans to sell calves. The Marketing Document lists when and where calves will sell and it documents the average beef value (\$B), weaned calf value (\$W), and expected progeny differences (EPDs) of the herd sires used on the enrollment group. Plus, there is room on each document to add herd health, management practices and other important data potential buyers want to know.

Each week an email is generated and sent to more than 600 potential buyers who are looking for high-quality, Angus-sired calves to purchase. Some technology-driven producers will submit GeneMax® (GMX) Focus™ tests on one-third of their enrollment group. This information can be added to the Marketing Document, too. The feeder-calf document will print the average overall, gain and marbling scores on their AngusSource or AngusSource Genetic Marketing Document.

Choosing to use DNA technology for commercial cattlemen is an outstanding tool for marketing and selecting replacement heifers. Once you pick your replacement heifers, test the group to determine who stays and who gets sent to the feedyard. Don't forget to use the results when marketing the steer mates.

With GMX testing, now there is no excuse for developing a heifer that will not produce a high-quality calf that will be in the top percentage for gain or grade. Test the group of heifers you have selected as potential replacements with GMX Focus. Sort by eye appeal, phenotype and production records before or after testing. This test is economical at only \$17 per animal.

Many producers sort out the females with poor production or soundness and then test the group. Others feel it is important to have a great-looking heifer that has an outstanding score, too. It is totally up to you. Results will be made available through AAA Login. There are three scores — gain, grade and an overall score. These can easily be pulled into an Excel spreadsheet so you can sort by any of the three scores.

The latest test for commercial producers is GMX Advantage™. This test will give producers at minimum

three scores — cow advantage, feeder advantage and total advantage.

- The cow advantage score predicts the profitability from the time you start developing her until she has weaned and sold her progeny.
- The feeder advantage score predicts the difference in net return of the feeder calf she produces. It takes into account feed efficiency, growth and *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®) brand carcass merit.
- The total advantage score uses the economically relevant traits from the feeder and cow advantage scores to predict the difference in profitability from genetic merit.
- Finally, the smart outlier reporting identifies females with extreme genetics, high or low.

Smart outlier reporting includes:

1. Cow cost from size and milk: identifies the bottom 5% of the females for highest cost in size and milk.
2. Docility: identifies the bottom 5% for undesirable temperament.
3. Marbling: identifies the top and bottom 25% for marbling.
4. Tenderness: identifies the bottom 5% that do not have favorable tenderness.

GMX Advantage costs \$44 per animal. If you look at the scores and determine the cost savings, this test may be similar to the planter shutoffs. A 50-unit difference in the total advantage score currently equates to approximately

\$75-\$80 net return. If you sell at weaning, the 50-unit difference in cow and feeder advantage scores equates to a \$35-\$50 net return. That doesn't even take into account heifer-development cost and a poor-gaining calf.

These are a few of the great tools available to commercial cattlemen today at the American Angus Association. The future is bright and registered-Angus bulls can continue to bring increased profits to your program. The American Angus Association, along with your seedstock supplier, wants you to be informed and have access to every available tool to be a profitable producer.

On the horizon is a new program for young producers who want to raise quality commercial Angus feeders and replacement females. Visit www.angus.org to learn more about our Future Angus Stockmen program.



Editor's Note: *Ginette Kurtz is the director of commercial programs at the American Angus Association.*