



By the Numbers

► by Dan Moser, American Angus Association

Setting goals

This issue of Angus Journal focuses in part on setting herd goals in a breeding program. For my first column, I'd like to discuss my goals for the Association's Performance Programs Department and Angus Genetics Inc.

Directions and decisions

Every successful cattle breeding program starts with well-defined goals. Goals guide your direction, focus and priorities, and can serve as a roadmap to the future of your operation. Producers face challenging decisions on a regular basis, but a clear set of goals can help clarify what really matters. Likewise, in the department of performance programs and Angus Genetics Inc., our goals and those provided by the board of directors guide our progress.

One of the most appealing things about this new opportunity was the Association's tradition of leadership and innovation, especially in the area of performance programs.

Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®), national cattle evaluation using expected progeny differences (EPDs), ultrasound measurement of carcass traits in live animals, and comprehensive use of genomic information in EPD calculation were all beef industry milestones led by our Association.

It's exciting to think of the opportunities for innovation that will be presented in the next decade or two. I'm committed to continuing this tradition of leadership and innovation to provide our membership and their customers with the most useful selection tools possible.

Trait emphases

One specific area in which I'd like to see more emphasis is the collection and analysis of reproduction data. We all recognize the economic importance of traits like cow fertility and longevity, but because of their

relatively low heritability, they require more data to produce accurate evaluations.

Many of our members are enrolled in MaternalPlus®, the Association's program for reporting of cow inventory and reproduction data, but I'd like to see even more herds participate in the program. To that end, we'll be studying ways to encourage more members to enroll in MaternalPlus and look at how we can make the process more user-friendly. The EPDs for cow reproductive efficiency and longevity that result from this program will be powerful tools for Angus breeders and their commercial customers.

Another goal is to make our evaluation program more comprehensive. I've already received phone calls and emails from members about a few traits of interest that are not currently included in the Angus genetic evaluation. While not every trait is important to every member, when traits are economically important to a significant portion of the membership, and the data can be efficiently collected and analyzed, we'll consider adding them to the evaluation.

We'll also regularly review our dollar value indices (\$Values), like beef value (\$B) and weaning value (\$W), to ensure our economic models include all analyzed traits that impact profitability under those scenarios, and to keep the production cost and revenue assumptions current. In all cases, we want to ensure that we are using the best science to serve the membership's needs.

Tradition of service

In the short time I've been in the office in Saint Joseph, I've already gained a great appreciation for my fellow Association employees. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous job Tonya Amen has done in leading AGI these past few

months, and I am counting on her continued contributions going forward.

In my previous job as coordinator of the Kansas State University (K-State) Purebred Beef Unit, I always received excellent customer service from Association staff, whether I had a question with parentage testing, EPDs, DNA testing or billing. I'm dedicated to maintaining the level of customer service you expect from your Association, and improving upon that whenever possible. Any new tools we provide need to be as user-friendly as they can be. I hope you'll offer candid feedback so those programs can be enhanced to benefit the membership as much as possible.

As a former educator, I've seen firsthand how former students have put knowledge of genetics to work in their own cattle operations. I hope through presentations, documents and other communications methods, our group can help members better understand genetic technologies such as EPDs, \$Values and genomics. As a seedstock breeder, you often have the best opportunity to educate commercial cattle producers. Let me know how we can provide the information you need to better serve your customers.

Since I was a child, I've enjoyed my interactions with breeders of purebred livestock. In my new role, I'm looking forward to meeting many more breeders of Angus cattle. Many of you will be in Kansas City for the Angus Means Business National Convention & Trade Show. If you have a chance, I hope you'll stop and introduce yourself, and tell me a little about your Angus operation. Regardless of where you're from, the size of your operation or the individual goals you have for your herd, I hope our department can help you attain those goals. I look forward to working with each of you.

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Editor's Note: "By The Numbers" is a column by Association performance programs staff to share insights about data collection and interpretation, National Cattle Evaluation (NCE), genetic selection and relevant technology and industry issues. Dan Moser is president of Angus Genetics Inc. If you have questions or would like to suggest a topic for a future column, contact the Association at 816-383-5100.

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