

# Beef Logic

by R.A. "Bob" Long



## World Secretariat should remain proactive

The Angus breed is advancing throughout the world. Among purebred herds in the United States, annual Angus registrations total more than the next four or five beef breeds combined.

The introduction of black color and polled heads into herds representing the Continental breeds is equally complimentary. Universally, crossbreeding schemes and newly developed composite breeds use Angus germ plasm.

Angus acceptance is also seen in Argentina, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Surely it is not coincidental that the unequal advancement of the breed has been accompanied by adoption of new technology. Angus breeders and their associations have pioneered artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET). For example, almost half of the 271,000 Angus calves registered this past year were AI-sired, and ET produced 20,383 of those.

Similarly, the American Angus performance database is the largest in the world and has been routinely refined and made more effective by the incorporation of reference sires, breeding values and expected progeny differences (EPDs). Currently, the adoption of ultrasound measurements for body composition in live animals will further increase the amount and effectiveness of performance data. Such forward-thinking leadership deserves accolades.

### Global positioning

Leading beef producers from all over the planet will gather in Scotland this summer for the World Angus Forum. The first International Angus Forum was in Sydney, Australia, in 1969, with Angus organizations from eight countries represented.

This group formed the World Angus Secretariat, which has conducted a World

Angus Forum every four years since its inauguration. Each Forum has seen the Secretariat grow in stature and in numbers as eight more countries have joined, further advancing the potential for influence in the international beef industry.

The avowed purpose of the Forum is the discussion of factors that might enhance the position of Angus cattle in the beef industry or that might hinder advancement.

It is hoped that the unparalleled successes of recent years will not lead to

complacency as the group considers the future of its great genetic pool.



### An international challenge

A worthy and timely undertaking for the World Angus Secretariat would be to bring together the total Angus performance data available in the world. Already, the American and Canadian associations have combined their data.

The logistics of such a task on a worldwide scope are well within the capabilities of available electronic data-processing and communication technology. Further, the universal acceptance of standard procedures, common reference sires and the resulting explosion in size of the database would make the most effective tool for breed improvement the world has seen.

An international performance recordkeeping system for dairy cattle already exists under the name "International Bull Evaluation Service," commonly called Interbull. Currently, 25 countries contribute data to this program. Interbull deals primarily with data from the Holstein breed with only a few Guernsey cattle involved.

A major function of Interbull is the maintenance of an elite international list ranking the world's top 100 Holstein bulls. U.S. breeders have dominated this list during the last decade, resulting in semen exports averaging about \$60 million/year.

This recognition and marketing success is, of course, due to extensive, accurate performance recordkeeping by U.S. breeders and almost universal use of the top sires via AI.

Establishment of a "World Angus Data Bank" would encounter more problems than the Holstein-oriented Interbull. Dairymen place the most selection pressure on milk production, and most dairy operations use high-energy diets. In contrast, beef breeders must consider milk, growth rate, carcass quality, cutability, climate, management practices, diets and more.

Therefore, the use of standard procedures and universal reference sires would be required throughout the world, demanding considerable effort and skill in public relations, diplomacy and negotiation.

### The future is now

Would it be worth it? Most likely. The U.S. Angus database is by far the largest and most sophisticated breed database in the world and as such practically assures the recognition of U.S. Angus genetics as superior. This should stimulate exports of U.S. semen and embryos and increase acceptance of the Angus breed internationally.

The world dairy industry uses one breed — Holstein. Why not Angus for the world's beef industry?

What does the future hold for the Angus breed? Whatever the Angus breeders of the world decide.

Shakespeare said it best: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ... On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

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