

Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president



Taking a global look at Angus challenges and opportunities

Since 1969 when the first World Angus Secretariat meeting was held in Sidney, Australia, the goal of the Secretariat has been to promote the international exchange of ideas and concerns about the Angus breed, its associations and its societies.

By bringing together Angus producers and professionals, a basis for communication has been established during the past 30 years. This, in turn, allows colleagues from different countries to discuss common problems, compare recent findings and research, and evaluate areas for further study and collaborative effort.

More importantly, direct contact at these meetings enables representatives to address differences in a way that is constructive for Angus and for the beef industry worldwide.

The World Angus Secretariat currently includes 20 member countries. The most recent meeting of the Secretariat, hosted by the Canadian Angus Association, was held in Calgary in July. The meeting included representatives from 12 countries: Scotland, Ireland, Germany, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Mexico, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, the United States and Canada.

The status of Angus and the beef industry in each country becomes a focal point for each Secretariat meeting. Success stories, problems and concerns in an ever-changing beef industry on a worldwide basis are of interest to the advancement of Angus.

In general, all countries reported growth in the Angus industry to the point that Angus is now the leading beef breed registry in all countries attending the meeting. Many of these countries have achieved that status in recent years.

The quest for genetic evaluation of Angus seedstock in each country and on an international basis was at the forefront of this year's agenda. This topic has headlined many Secretariat meetings, and the need for genetic evaluation of Angus cattle is essential

for the growth of the breed worldwide.

The United States reported that both American and Canadian Angus associations have conducted an ongoing discussion of a joint sire evaluation analysis for a number of years. Within the past 12 months, Iowa State University conducted a National Cattle Evaluation research project for the Canadian Angus Association, which included both the Canadian and the American Angus association databases.

From that report came action by both associations to conduct a joint analysis in 2000. This will represent the first analysis of its kind, and it is further enhanced by use of U.S. bulls in Canada. During the past year, seven of the top 10 bulls for registrations in Canada were U.S. bulls.

The project has the potential to be a first step to international cattle evaluation with the widespread use of U.S. bulls globally.

The importance of end-product marketing was a second subject of discussion, and the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program and Angus marketing programs on an international basis were reviewed. Nearly all countries have an Angus end-product marketing program, and an effort to create demand for Angus seedstock has been a strong motivation behind end-product marketing programs of societies and associations.

The role of blood typing on DNA for parent-verification programs was another topic of the Secretariat. The United States continues to utilize blood typing for this purpose even though a blood sample is kept from each animal and stored for the purpose of a future transition to DNA. The American Angus Association continues to wait for a standardization of DNA probes across labs and on an international basis. Currently the Association has a database of more than 75,000 blood typings on file that prove effective in assisting with parent verification.

One subject of particular interest to all countries was a U.S. report on the current

status of ultrasound for carcass evaluation. The American Angus Association will release a research report this fall with more than 35,000 ultrasound scans. The potential is exciting for the opportunity to vastly increase the evaluation process for carcass merit.

Additional issues involved a review of research on calving ease in Angus, a literature review of marbling and other production traits, the Angus certification program in Canada, unique cattle identification (ID) systems, youth programs in respective countries, grading standards in Australia and the "Code of Practice" for the World Angus Secretariat. In addition, the group heard from Canadian speakers about the marketing of Canadian beef and technology utilized in the Canadian beef industry.

The World Angus Secretariat meets every four years at the World Angus Forum hosted by a member country. The last Forum was held in Australia in 1997.

On a two-year interval the Secretariat meets for a technical meeting such as the one held in Canada this July. Angus members agreed to work toward strengthened communication between national associations and to continue efforts to improve the breed.

The next and ninth World Angus Forum will be hosted by the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society in Scotland in 2001. Angus producers from around the world will visit the "home of the breed" during the summer activity, June 13-July 4, 2001. Information on the meeting and tour will be available this fall from the American Angus Association.

The event will also host the next World Angus Secretariat meeting.

We hope you can make plans to be with us as part of the U.S. delegation at this international Angus event in two years.

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