



PHOTO BY MATT CALDWELL

# Survey Details Angus Influence

Survey reports 34% of herds are considered straightbred Angus, 89% of commercial herds use Angus.

by **Steve Suther**, Certified Angus Beef LLC

English breeds have dominated the genetic base of the U.S. cow herd for many years, but a January 2014 online survey of 1,245 producers in the *Beef Today/Farm Journal* database shows more detail.

Based on those who named Angus as the primary breed of cow and listed no other breed of bull used or purchased in the past three years, 34% of herds can be considered straightbred Angus. That's about four times the number of all other straightbred herds.

Crossbred herds account for 58% of the total, and most of those use Angus genetics. Only 20% have no Angus genetics, and after accounting for non-Angus purebred herds, that means 89% of crossbred herds use Angus genetics (see Fig. 1, page 168).

Nearly 46% of respondents to the online study owned fewer than 50 cows, but results did not change significantly when those records were removed from totals. Those with more than 200 cows tended to use a slightly lower percentage of Angus bulls.

Producers surveyed operated mainly in the North central, South central, Midwest and Southeast regions; however, the

West, Northwest and Northeast were also represented. Survey data showed more non-Angus bulls used in the North central region.

## Demographics

Producers aged 46 to 75 years made up 79% of the group, followed by those 30-45 and older than 75; the 3% who were younger than 30 years old were much more likely to use Angus bulls (70%). At the other end, those older than 75 used the most other breeds. Excluding those two ends that were not well-represented, the older the producer, the more likely they were to use Angus bulls.

Bull usage in 2013 was recorded as 40.2% Angus only, followed by "multiple breeds including Angus" at 29.2% and "multiple breeds but no Angus" at 7.2%. The rest were widely scattered among a dozen or more other breeds that showed as much as one-tenth the Angus level, such as Hereford at 4.2% (see Fig. 2, page 168).

Asked to name one breed that most represents the herd, producers named Angus 62.4% of the time, but some felt a need to list more than one, so there were 2.6% that

named Angus and some other breed. Twelve percent named other English breeds, with Hereford representing half of those.

## Technology use

In this market where a single premium beef carcass may bring \$2,500, it may be surprising that 39.6% paid less than \$2,500 for a bull in 2013, and 11.2% paid more than \$5,000.

When it comes to DNA technology such as marker-assisted genetic selection, 31.4% would use it if the cost was less than \$15, which is generally below the market for any commercial tests available today. Nearly 8.5% would use it at higher prices, but 60.2% would not use genomic tools at any price.

More than 65,000 bulls were represented by survey participants, 55% of them Angus, and 16.1% of all planned to use artificial insemination in 2014.

Results of the survey were cross-tabulated by breeding system and genetics, as well as trait preferences and other answers to create profiles for various mind-sets among producers.

Operators of primarily Angus herds led all others in stressing the importance of a bull being registered and backed by DNA information, while in management traits they chose feedlot performance and carcass data as top concerns more often than other producers.

Those who ranked individual carcass data as above-average importance numbered only 37%, but it was 41% among primarily Angus operations. Similarly, access to feedlot

**Table 1: Buying or growing the herd**

	% of responses	
	More	Fewer
Have you kept more replacement heifers 2011-2013?	58.22	41.78
Will you keep more replacement heifers 2014-2016?	59.09	40.91
Have you purchased more breeding females 2011-2013?	29.59	70.41
Will you buy more breeding females in 2014-2016?	26.28	73.72

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performance data was more important to 35.4% of all, but to 39.8% of Angus operations. By comparison, only 33% of those with other purebred herds ranked each of the two traits at more than average importance.

Survey design prevents digging too deeply into management priorities because it asked participants to rank factors. The decision to rank carcass data at the top meant some other factor such as vaccinations, calf identification (ID) or brand eligibility would show up relatively lower. That effect can be seen for those who ranked carcass data high. A natural interest in calf ID and feedlot performance would follow.

That meant an apparent but likely not “real” gap between those who rank carcass data above average but up to 60% putting vaccinations as below-average importance, and those who ranked carcass data below average but 63.8% ranked vaccinations first or second.

Cross-correlations for bull-selection traits were less affected because a wider scale was used.

Participants reporting the use of no Angus genetics were the most likely to use artificial insemination (AI), and among the most likely to rank calving ease and disposition as top selection criteria.

Crossbred herd managers ranked calving ease, breeder reputation and growth as the top three traits in bull selection.

Among those who ranked carcass data as a top management concern, 55.6% named carcass value and 44.4% named feedlot performance in the top three for bull

selection. For the subset of those who operate primarily Angus herds, those numbers were 65% and 51.3%. For those with no Angus genetics but favoring carcass data, the numbers were 50.7% and 41.4%.

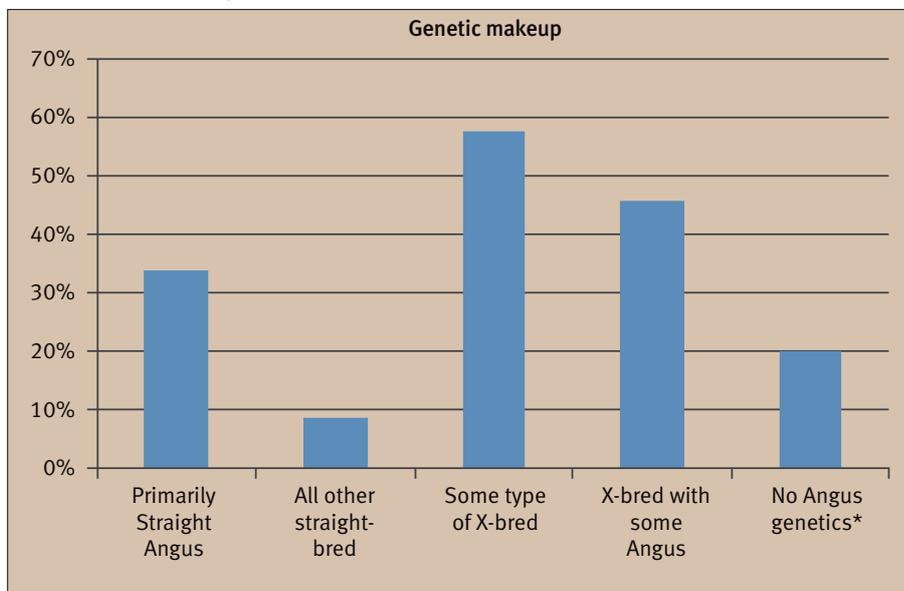
The survey asked if respondents have retained more heifers in the past three years and if they plan to retain more in the next three. A similar question explored past and intentions to buy females (see Table 1, page 167).

By a margin of 58 to 42, they have kept more in the past, and that ratio goes up by one for the next three years. On the other hand, fewer than 30% bought breeding females in the past three years, and only 26% plan to buy in the next three. In both categories, disposition and calving ease ranked highest for bull selection, followed by breeder reputation.



**Editor's Note:** Steve Suther is director of industry information for Certified Angus Beef LLC's Supply Development Division.

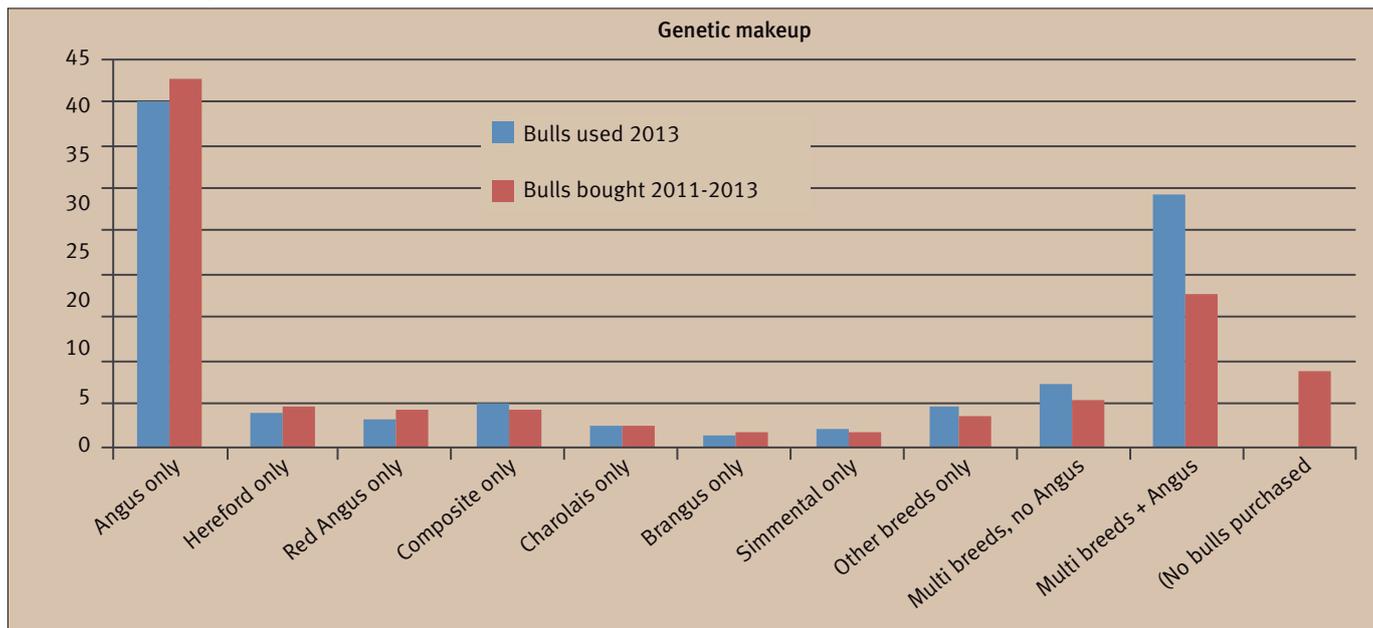
**Fig. 1: Herd breeding program**



\*Includes non-Angus straightbred herds.

Source: Certified Angus Beef LLC, 2014.

**Fig. 2: Bull use and purchases**



Source: Certified Angus Beef LLC, 2014.