AIMS Tech Notes

by Scott Johnson, director of Angus Information Management Software

'2.0d' or 'not 2.0d' — that is the question

By now, all current users of Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) should have long-since upgraded to version 2.0d. I hope everyone has upgraded; however, I know that some of you haven't.

I highly recommend you make the upgrade. There are several things that need to be fixed in the old versions, plus you are missing some new features. I even know of one user who is still using version 2.0b, which means he hasn't run the upgrade from December 1999. I don't know how else to say it, but please upgrade!

"OK," you might be saying, "how do I know what version I'm using?" Glad you asked. Simply start AIMS, click on Help, then About, and it will show you the version number. If it says anything besides 2.0d, you're missing good stuff. We've even gone so far as to indicate even more subtle upgrades that we continue to put out — we call them "builds," which I'll discuss later.

First, let me describe the key features, fixes and enhancements in 2.0d.

- The five new ultrasound body-composition expected progeny differences (EPDs) have been added to the National Sire Evaluation search module, and the data is from spring 2001, so you don't have to pay for an update file or download it from the Internet.
- A new window was added to view all the EPDs for a pen of cattle in spreadsheet format. The normal single-animal pop-up windows still are available, too.
- A validation has been added to the animal name field so that double and trailing spaces are fixed.
- Another option was added to Tools, Options, General, so saving certain types of records (income/expense, sales, etc.) does not always require a confirmation.
- The floating EPD window was fixed to properly indicate which animal is being displayed as you move through the Pedigree tab.
- A key bug in yearling calculations in previous versions of AIMS has been fixed.
- Another key bug was most-likely calving dates and sires on the breeding tab,

especially if Preg Check information was entered.

- New disposal codes adopted by the Angus Herd Information Records (AHIR) program have been implemented throughout AIMS. The first time AIMS 2.0d is started, old codes are converted automatically. Those of you receiving upgrade packets received more details about the change, and the Weaning chapter in the Help file has been updated.
- Speaking of the Help file, I went through and updated all of the information, which even included some changes from 2.0c. A couple of features have been added after the Help file was updated, but it's pretty accurate at this point.
- The order of sires on the Breeding screen now will match the order of the original pen.
- New breeding records can be set to default as AI or Pasture.
- You now can submit carcass data electronically to the Association, and you can request an update of existing animals that had data submitted by other means.
- A new import process has been added so that tab-delimited text files can be imported directly into the weaning or yearling fields. This feature gives you the ability to enter data in a different program — even a PalmPilot or other portable device — then create a file to import directly into AIMS.
- You now can create a pedigree-verification-request file, and the American Angus Association will run a free process on the data to verify that the pedigree, as stored on your computer, is accurate. We also automatically run this process on any EPD-request file. In either case, we will return a report to you if problems are discovered. All of this was created initially to close an obscure loophole in the Additional Animal import routine, but we also know users accidentally can change sire or dam tattoos and inadvertently change pedigrees. Now you have a way to make sure everything is OK.

- A Performance Pedigree report was added to the Reports list, and the Cow Production report received a major overhaul.

Besides these, there are probably another 20-30 minor changes to things as obscure as the width of some date fields and the background color of some fields. A list of all changes was included with the upgrade materials.

So you might be asking, "Is the program completely bug-free now?" Simple answer: no. There are still some bugs, but virtually all of them were related to either new or last-minute changes.

The good news is that we have an easy way to fix everything we've found. We're using the Internet to distribute "patch" files that will fix everything we've discovered.

We already have put the patch file on the Internet to fix several bugs in 2.0d. To track these changes, we've adopted a "build" version right below "2.0d" on the Help/About screen.

The concept of patches is common in the software world; you can find patches for virtually all well-known programs and probably the not-so-well-known ones, too. (Do some searching on the Internet to see if patches for your other programs are available.).

Our patches are part of the AIMS Web site at *www.angus.org/aims*. Look for the Messages link, then read the messages for download information. It also will explain what the latest build number should be. At press time it was 1.0.5. I also would suggest frequent visits to the AIMS home page for information on patches, future upgrades, user ideas and new reports.

What's next? Well, we still need to add the ultrasound EPDs to animal records and to add and change many other fields. However, changing the data structure is a significant process, and we must do it carefully to prevent data loss. We're already working on these changes with plans to launch another upgrade in early 2001.

e-mail: scottj@angus.org