



Tech Notes

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It's time for new resolutions

OK, I know you'll be reading this in February, so New Year's is old news. But if you're like me, the January resolutions are forgotten. I'd like to list some ideas for AIMS resolutions you could adopt in their place.

✓ Resolution No. 1 — make a backup

The rest of these resolutions are in random order, but this one is first because it's so important. If you don't have a backup, Murphy's law *will* get you and you *will* lose your data. It isn't a question of *if* it will happen; it's a question of *when*.

AIMS makes it extremely easy to make a backup: Click on File, Backup, Save. That's it, just three clicks and you've made a backup.

Now, that isn't the end of the story because you only made the backup to your computer's hard drive, but that's OK. I think some people don't make backups because they think they are required to save them to a floppy [3.5-inch (in.)] disk, a CD-ROM, a tape or a zip disk. All of those are good to use, but there's nothing wrong with making a backup to the hard drive, even if it's every day (maybe use a rotating system where you re-use filenames every seven days). I even suggest making a backup right before you import an expected progeny difference (EPD) or performance file, as well as before you delete any animals or before you import additional animals. The point: Make a quick backup before you do anything drastic to the data. If things go wrong, you simply restore the backup (File, Restore and point to the file).

So, make a backup to the hard drive frequently. Then make backups to other media (mentioned above) occasionally. And as one final step, take one of those disks to a different building in case of a severe catastrophe, such as fire, flood, tornado or whatever! (For more information on making backups, see the September 2002 "Tech Notes.")

✓ Resolution No. 2 — get new herd EPDs

You may have already done this, but don't forget to get your new herd EPDs. All you need to do is use File, Data, Export; then

change the operation to EPD Request for the All Animals pen and send us the resulting 'E' file. E-mail it to us. We'll return a file that you import and you will have updated all the animals in your active herd plus their sire and dam. All this costs a flat rate of \$15.

✓ Resolution No. 3 — get new NSE EPDs

The National Sire Evaluation (NSE) portion of your AIMS program also needs to be updated. There's a link for it on the AIMS Web site, but the direct URL (Uniform Resource Locator, or an Internet address) for the download page is www.angus.org/aims/nseupdate.html.

Follow the directions provided. In short, you'll download a file, open it (to run the update), then answer, "Yes," when it asks about overwriting files; it's overwriting the old data. This is the update for the NSE menu option under your AIMS Tools command.

✓ Resolution No. 4 — learn how to do e-mail attachments

Sending and receiving files through the Internet, by way of e-mail, has become a key part of using AIMS. The more you can learn about how to use your e-mail program — especially attachments — the quicker you will be able to transfer data back and forth with the Association. I included a "Tech Notes" column in the AIMS Help file that goes to great lengths to help you learn about attachments. To find it in AIMS, go to Help, Contents and then scroll to the *very last* link, which is titled "How to use E-mail Attachments."

Remember that working with e-mail attachments has two parts — attaching them to outgoing e-mail and doing something with attachments when they come into your computer. Be sure to read

about how to save those incoming attachments to the folder of your choice.

Resolution No. 4a — While you're learning about your e-mail program, try looking for some of those "extra" things the program can do. For example, try looking for an Options or Properties menu command; it's often under Tools or File. See if there are program defaults that you would like (or need) to change.

Maybe you want your default font for new messages to be a different style or size. There should be a way to change the default location where e-mail attachments are saved or perhaps you can change the sound it makes when an e-mail comes in. The point is, try experimenting, you can always click Cancel if you don't like the result.

✓ Resolution No. 5 — learn how to use Windows Explorer

Windows Explorer is kind of the main "traffic handler" of any Windows computer. To get it started, I like to right-click on the Start button, then left-click on Explore. There's also a variation of Explorer you can start by double-clicking on the My Computer icon on the desktop.

Windows Explorer gives you a visual map of your entire computer, including attached hardware and all the folders and files it contains. It's great for copying, moving and organizing your files. Be sure to try creating new folders. Then click and drag files from one folder to another.

A side benefit of learning about Explorer is that you will better understand some of the other windows that open during other programs, especially the Save In and Look In dialog windows used for working with files.

For example, assume you're in your e-mail program and want to attach a file. Once you click on Attach (or whatever command your program uses), the program will open a window that wants you to point to the file. The window will generally say something like Look In, which is the folder where it is looking. You can change this folder to virtually *any* folder on your computer; then it will display all of the files in that folder in the bigger box below the Look In field.

The point is, the Look In and Save In (or whatever they happen to be labeled) are very common to Windows, so it's a good idea to learn how to use them. Yes, sometimes they look a little different — they may be labeled differently, or they may be different sizes — but in the end, they do the same thing.

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