

by Shauna Rose Hermel  
*Editor*



## What's in a number?

*Let me throw a number out to you — 32. What does it mean? Without context, a number is just a number. It could identify my favorite football player of all time. It could mean the difference in what shoes I want to wear this morning.*

If we are talking cattle, it could be the number that dissuades you from buying a particular bull because his heifers likely won't fit your sparse grazing environment. Or, it could be the extra dollars per head — or per hundredweight — that you or your customers receive for that set of fed cattle on payday.

As Angus breeders, we live by the numbers — the theme of this issue. They are both a blessing and a curse. It's not a wonder why, when surveyed, our readers ask for more information on genetics, expected progeny differences (EPDs), Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) and, in the last decade, genomics.

### Powerful asset

Members of the American Angus Association have built the largest, most powerful single-breed database in the beef industry. It has laid the foundation for the breed's success and therefore its members' success. As general demand for Angus grows, more individual bulls can be sold, and that provides room for more Angus breeders to succeed.

EPDs are invaluable in setting the parameters for the cattle you buy or in selecting replacements for your herd. As you open your checkbook or hand over the plastic to purchase that next herd sire or to invest in next year's tank of genetics, no one understands better the value of having the most accurate genetic predictions possible. After all, you

are banking on those genetics improving your herd, not taking it backward.

Those numbers help you decide with greater accuracy which individuals are worth the time, effort and dollars to develop because they have the genetic potential to work in your herd or in your customers'. They help match the right genetics to your customers' herds so you can be a better seedstock supplier.

Several stories in this issue document the positive results.

### The big but

Yet, even though we sit in the position to benefit the most from genetic progress, we often drag our feet as sellers.

After all, it never fails that at least one EPD will bomb on that bull calf we've kept our eye on since the day he was born, hoping he'd be the next young sire to catch a bull stud's eye or maybe pay for Junior's freshman year.

DNA testing is another expense, and you never know what you'll find out. It could ruin a bull's future marketability.

Another EPD is another number you have to start watching and to understand. And, doggone, it's hard to get a bull to be in the top percentile for all the EPDs we have now, let alone another one.

Stop to consider: One of the things that can damage the future marketability of your brand is selling an animal that doesn't live up to

expectations. Isn't it better to know and represent accurately?

How much more do you receive for a bull today than you did 10-15 years ago? You are selling genetics. Doesn't it make sense that it would require a little more input for that part of the package?

Can you tell me an industry where you can expect to do things the way you did 30 years ago and retain your competitive position?

Why are we marketing for extreme EPD values, when the average might be closer to the ideal — other than it's easier to market the most than to market what's needed. Are your customers' cattle so lacking in certain traits that they need the extreme?

Behind ample nutrition and a protective health program, I wholeheartedly believe the new Angus GS™ test, especially if used to profile every heifer calf in your herd, offers you as a breeder and as a member of the American Angus Association the most potential for long-term return on investment you have this year. What you stand to gain in being at the forefront of the next advancement in fertility and reproduction — well, historians will look back and say that's what kept the Angus breed in the forefront.

Don't be afraid to invest in your future and the future of the breed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shauna".

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