

# FOUNDATION FUNDAMENTALS



by Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation

## Research opens new frontiers

*Investing in beef cattle research to help registered Angus seedstock and commercial cattle producers who depend on Angus genetics succeed was envisioned by the Angus Foundation's forefathers in 1980 when the organization was established.*

During the fledgling nonprofit's early years, the Angus Foundation's limited resources available for spending were initially directed toward the National Junior Angus Board (NJAB), leadership training, and supporting and promoting junior Angus youth activities in the United States.

Then, as more funds became available from generous Angus breeders seeing the value of the Angus Foundation to Angus youth, the outreach was expanded to include implementation of the increasingly popular Leaders



Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference in 1993, followed by the Angus Foundation's general undergraduate and graduate student scholarship programs starting in 1998 and 2008, respectively.

Growth of these programs, and implementation of others since, available to today's Angus youth, has been made possible only by the support we receive from generous

Angus breeders, allied industry interests and friends.

### Adult growth

Similarly, beginning with implementation of the Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC) in 2003, Cattlemen's Boot Camps in 2005, Beef Leaders Institute (BLI) in 2008 and the biennial Women Connected conference in 2012, educational programs for adult producers became realities through the increased base of contributors and their charitable giving to the



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organization. These educational opportunities continue to be made possible today for our producers, from unrestricted non-endowed charitable gifts.

Angus breeders' enthusiasm, and, more importantly, their endorsement of the Angus breed's first-ever significant fundraising initiative "Vision of Value: Campaign for Angus" in 2005, brought about additional unrestricted cash flow, enabling the organization to finally begin to realize our forefather's vision of funding beef cattle research projects of critical importance to Angus breeders and commercial producers.

## Initial investments

The first investment in research was \$24,000 in 2005 to help fund mapping of the bovine genome markers, or single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) sequencing. By studying the bovine genome, researchers were able to identify genes influencing production traits and carcass traits. Research findings formed the background for DNA technology applied in subsequent years to American Angus Association genomic-enhanced expected progeny differences (EPDs).

Next was \$140,000 over five years from 2007-2010 to discover and document sire differences in feed efficiency and carcass traits, and the genetic parameters used to measure those traits. The overarching goal was to assess the impact of genetics, environment and genetic-by-environment interactions on live-animal performance and ultrasound, carcass and behavioral measurements. Genetic evaluation methodology research at \$60,000 annually by the Angus Foundation began at this same time.

Through the years, the scope of other projects funded by the Angus

Foundation has included hair shedding, muscle biology, marbling, bull fertility, genomic sequencing, ground beef, heat stress, beef tenderness, brisket disease, fescue toxicosis and consumer satisfaction with meat products. Depending on the research and funding required, timelines for projects ranged from a single year to multiple years.

## Project funding

Proposals requesting funding for research projects are reviewed by the American Angus Association's Research Priorities Committee (RPC). Research projects approved and recommended by the RPC for funding are forwarded to the Angus Foundation Board of Directors for their consideration and approval. Results from research funded by the 501(c)(3) nonprofit are required to be available for release into the public domain.

Total investment in research thus far by the Angus Foundation is nearly \$1.4 million for the 12-year period 2005-2017 (see Table 1).

## Progressive focus

Never satisfied with the status quo, visionary and progressive Angus breeders voted approval Nov. 7, 2016, at the American Angus Association's Annual Convention of Delegates a Long Range Strategic Plan (LRSP) setting forth five key goals, including increased research emphasis within the Association and the Angus Foundation.

Following are the core strategies identified to achieve this goal:

- Take a more proactive role as an Association in seeking out research proposals that address identified research needs.
- Place an emphasis on potential fertility challenges and make it

**Table 1: Annual Foundation research investments, 2005-2017**

Year	Funds
2005	\$24,000
2006	—
2007	\$35,000
2008	\$136,056
2009	\$117,500
2010	\$150,000
2011	\$173,333
2012	\$180,050
2013	\$95,000
2014	\$95,000
2015	\$168,579
2016	\$121,500
2017	\$81,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,377,018</b>

a priority with the Association and members to improve fertility across the breed.

- Place an emphasis on improving feet and leg structure of Angus cattle to improve performance and production longevity.
- Proactively work with the research community (academia and private industry) to develop strategic partnerships that utilize new genetic technologies to produce disease-resistant cattle.

Early estimates for research initiatives focused on improving fertility, feet and leg structure, and disease resistance and health in the Angus breed is \$1 million (minimum). Once plans are more defined and the decision is made to move forward with an ambitious campaign for beef cattle research, we'll need your help.

## Ambitious plans

Where will these funds come from? Will you do your part? **AJ**

**Editor's Note:** For more information about the nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, visit [www.angusfoundation.org](http://www.angusfoundation.org).