

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



Always learning

A new year often brings resolutions. For many though, by February those resolutions have been discarded.

I hope that's not the case for you, but if it is, here's a gentle reminder to recommit. For me, I'm trying to get in better physical shape and hoping that putting this in writing will help hold me accountable.

Another resolution is to be diligent about keeping a learner mindset. I understand that as I get into my "advanced years," traps can exist to believe that I've got it all figured out. I want to guard against that, and maintain the same curiosity and hunger to learn new things that I had when I first began my career.

Many of the Angus cattlemen I admire most have an incredible thirst for learning. They understand this business is constantly changing and to stay relevant it's important to keep up. They study new technologies while learning from other cattlemen. They take in every opportunity to learn a new tool or gain a new perspective. It's admirable, and I believe it is a huge factor in their formula for success.

The leadership of the American Angus Association holds a shared vision about education. In the fall of 2020, the Association released long-range objectives that placed education as a core pillar. These objectives can be found at www.angus.org/pub/longrangeobjectives.pdf.

One of the five pillars was "Serve as a Trusted Industry Resource,"

and one of the four strategies within that objective was to "offer relevant educational programming to match a diverse member and stakeholder base."

Of course, education is not a new initiative. The Association has been offering educational programs for decades. More recently, though, that education has become more coordinated and compiled in Angus University. There have been webinars, tutorial videos, fact sheets and in-person meetings to share knowledge on topics ranging from genetics to nutrition to marketing.


We acknowledge there are different levels of experience and knowledge across our diverse member base, and in turn the Association has tried to build programming with that in mind. We are excited about what has been built thus far and look forward to much more in the future. As you have ideas about topics we can help you with, I hope you'll share them with our team.

When it comes to genetics, I do understand there can be a fine line between education and consultation. It has always been the intention of the Association to teach about expected progeny differences (EPDs) and the genetic selection toolbox, but never to direct how or even if a cattleman uses those tools. I believe it is very important for registered

breeders and commercial cattlemen alike to have a sound working knowledge of EPDs — what they are and, maybe more importantly, what they are not.

It is not the job of the Association to recommend an EPD range for any trait, but rather to provide education on how the EPD can make a desired directional change. If a cattleman is going to use dollar value indexes (\$Values), I believe they need to understand the breeding objective of the index and the component traits included.

Even EPD percentile rankings require some education and if misused, can take a cattleman in an unintended direction.

Education is such a powerful thing. When armed with knowledge, I believe people can accomplish incredible things. That all starts with a curious mindset and being open to new ways of thinking. After all, as the famous saying goes — "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." 

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Mark A. McCully". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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