

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



Outliers

Since starting in this role last summer, the most frequent conversation I have with members centers around the topic of expected progeny differences (EPDs).

Those discussions vary but many come back to a central theme: As the industry builds more advanced selection tools (EPDs) and the practice of selection becomes less subjective, what happens to the value of registered cattle that aren't in the very upper crust on their EPD profile? Cattle in the top 1% for calving ease, performance and carcass merit are as valuable as they've ever been. But at times, we see those "middle of the road" cattle struggle to bring more than commercial price in some situations and markets.

I've thought about this a lot, and it has been a frequent topic of discussion with the board. I certainly don't have the answers, but have made some observations as I travel the country and visit with Angus breeders.

First is the simple reality that as we build better tools that more objectively predict an animal's breeding value, we make it easier to rank animals and more accurately assign value. Obviously, this is not new and has been going on ever since Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) was started and we began measuring performance and later developing EPDs to help us identify the best ones. These tools allowed us to compare different cattle from different operations, remove the effect of age, feeding, weather and

other environmental factors, and truly understand which cattle had the most merit as parents. Clearly genomics and more sophisticated tools like selection indexes have advanced that today but the goal is the same.


With the building of these tools, it is easier and faster to identify genetic outliers. We are taught in basic animal breeding that a key to making genetic progress is to utilize trait outliers. These fundamentals certainly still exist. We have low-birth, high-growth Angus cattle today because breeders understand these fundamentals and "bend the curve" by finding outlier animals that calve easily and grow fast.

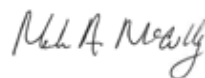
Customers in mind

Today outlier or "top 1%" cattle tend to have tremendous value in seedstock marketing, and they should. They command high dollars because they are rare and important breeding pieces to create genetic progress. But I would suggest we've possibly undervalued the cattle falling out of those top percentile designations in many situations. I think this can occur when we think of our commercial bull customers.

Not every commercial customer needs outlier genetics. In fact, most are best served by problem-free bulls that do lots of things well and keep

their operation out of the ditches. A bull in the top 1 percentile for calving ease may have extreme value to a bull stud because of the amount of artificial insemination (AI) done with heifers, but a top 50% direct calving ease might be sufficient for a guy breeding mature cows.

I'm not suggesting we don't strive for genetic progress, and I'm sure not telling anyone how to breed or value cattle. It's just my observation that in our marketing of the outliers, we run the risk of devaluing some good genetics that bring lots of things to the table. EPDs are powerful breeding tools and will allow us to continue building great Angus cattle that deliver value to the commercial beef industry. But as EPDs have become significant marketing tools, we just need to remember their intended purpose — to breed better cattle. 



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Grand Plan 2020 Lead-Off Donors

	AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION® EPDs & INDEXES										METHOD GENETICS INDEXES		
	REG. #	CED/%	BW/%	WW/%	YW/%	MILK/%	MARB/%	RE/%	SB/%	SC/%	MPI/%	QPI/%	ROI/%
GAR Sure Fire 3327	18943233	+6/45	+3/85	+82/1	+147/1	+32/10	+1.53/1	+.91/3	+230/1	+364/1	+176/1	+191/1	+329/1
GAR Sure Fire 3017	18943209	+11/10	+1.2/45	+69/5	+135/1	+34/5	+1.49/1	+.70/15	+224/1	+326/1	+154/8	+194/1	+309/1
GAR Sure Fire 1087	18943041	+12/10	+1.1/45	+71/3	+135/1	+30/20	+1.79/1	+.47/45	+221/1	+347/1	+181/1	+175/1	+321/1
GAR Sure Fire 1307	18943056	+10/15	+1.5/55	+76/2	+148/1	+21/75	+1.52/1	+.69/15	+206/1	+316/1	+179/1	+182/1	+325/1
GAR Sure Fire 447	18974786	+14/3	+1.1/45	+79/1	+140/1	+25/50	+1.64/1	+.76/10	+199/1	+339/1	+190/1	+176/1	+331/1
Chair Rock Sure Fire 7003	18789787	+5/55	+3.7/95	+79/1	+136/1	+28/30	+1.37/1	+1.0/2	+183/1	+325/1	+176/1	+170/1	+312/1
GAR Sure Fire 1027	18943035	+14/3	+.7/35	+74/2	+133/2	+26/40	+1.71/1	+.55/30	+206/1	+338/1	+152/10	+167/1	+286/2
GAR Momentum N187	19083983	+7/35	+2.3/70	+58/25	+114/10	+36/3	+1.30/1	+1.10/1	+207/1	+314/1	+157/6	+159/3	+284/3
GAR Sure Fire N807	19084189	+7/45	+2.2/70	+60/30	+103/35	+36/2	+1.19/4	+.68/35	+205/1	+332/1	+159/5	+166/1	+292/2
GAR Momentum 2877	18943199	+13/4	+1.3/50	+75/2	+127/3	+39/1	+1.64/1	+1.17/1	+214/1	+338/1	+162/3	+154/4	+285/2
GAR Momentum 1527	18943077	+15/2	+0/25	+61/25	+114/20	+37/2	+1.71/1	+.98/10	+209/1	+338/1	+136/34	+167/1	+270/7
GAR Momentum R207	19042599	+14/3	+.5/30	+68/5	+130/2	+33/10	+1.45/1	+1.06/1	+199/1	+302/2	+142/22	+152/5	+264/10
GAR Momentum 2167	18943137	+8/35	+1.9/65	+74/4	+125/10	+37/2	+1.36/2	+1.08/3	+190/2	+322/1	+162/3	+159/3	+289/2
GAR Sure Fire 2847	18943196	+10/15	+1.7/60	+65/10	+124/4	+27/35	+1.86/1	+.71/15	+198/1	+330/1	+148/14	+172/1	+286/2
GAR Sure Fire 2067	18943127	+11/10	+.7/35	+64/10	+117/10	+31/15	+1.73/1	+.48/40	+182/2	+324/1	+171/1	+150/6	+291/2

Grand Plan 2020 Lead-Off Heifer Donors

	AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION® EPDs & INDEXES										METHOD GENETICS INDEXES		
	REG. #	CED/%	BW/%	WW/%	YW/%	MILK/%	MARB/%	RE/%	SB/%	SC/%	MPI/%	QPI/%	ROI/%
GAR Sure Fire 2208	19266395	+8/35	+2.6/80	+76/3	+134/3	+26/40	+1.58/1	+1.17/2	+240/1	+369/1	+171/1	+179/1	+314/1
GAR Sure Fire 2268	19266401	+12/10	+1.2/50	+76/3	+143/1	+38/1	+1.58/1	+1.07/4	+229/1	+346/1	+158/5	+182/1	+304/1
GAR Ashland 3028	19266456	+13/10	+.2/25	+70/10	+129/5	+24/55	+1.28/3	+1.40/1	+233/1	+335/1	+161/4	+155/4	+285/2
GAR Ashland R148	19339942	+7/45	+3/85	+82/1	+152/1	+14/95	+1.58/1	+1.14/2	+249/1	+354/1	+148/14	+169/1	+283/3
GAR Momentum 1468	19266327	+7/45	+2.9/85	+81/2	+143/1	+34/4	+1.83/1	+.80/20	+224/1	+353/1	+147/15	+178/1	+289/2
GAR Momentum 2658	19266425	+17/1	-.2/20	+73/5	+139/2	+43/1	+1.31/2	+1.13/2	+223/1	+329/1	+155/7	+163/2	+285/2
GAR Ashland 3078	19266460	+14/3	+1.4/55	+76/3	+138/2	+26/40	+1.51/1	+1.04/4	+223/1	+335/1	+177/1	+169/1	+312/1
GAR Ashland 1198	19266300	+16/1	+1.2/50	+85/1	+157/1	+28/25	+1.61/1	+.65/35	+223/1	+341/1	+164/3	+181/1	+309/1
GAR Proactive 1718	19266350	+12/10	+.2/25	+76/3	+141/2	+24/55	+1.30/3	+.90/10	+205/1	+323/1	+169/2	+164/2	+300/1
GAR Sure Fire 158	19266198	+17/1	-.1/20	+74/4	+138/2	+27/30	+1.25/3	+1.05/4	+218/1	+344/1	+171/1	+155/4	+295/1
GAR Sure Fire 488	19266229	+9/25	+1.4/55	+73/5	+128/5	+27/30	+1.47/1	+1.00/10	+197/1	+320/1	+152/10	+176/1	+293/1
GAR Sure Fire 1338	19266314	+16/1	+0/25	+56/40	+108/25	+24/55	+1.79/1	+.94/10	+206/1	+341/1	+156/7	+169/1	+291/2
GAR Method 3228	19266470	+8/35	+1.7/60	+72/10	+145/1	+28/25	+1.21/4	+.95/10	+199/1	+293/3	+160/4	+160/2	+288/2
GAR Proactive 1308	19266311	+13/10	-.6/15	+65/15	+121/10	+30/15	+1.43/1	+.79/20	+193/1	+327/1	+164/3	+155/4	+288/2
GAR Ashland R178	19456277	+12/10	+.3/30	+67/15	+120/10	+21/80	+1.25/3	+.93/10	+201/1	+319/1	+170/1	+143/11	+284/3
GAR Ashland 988	19266279	+12/10	+1.1/45	+85/1	+153/1	+30/15	+1.44/1	+.89/15	+200/1	+328/1	+160/4	+154/4	+283/3
GAR Ashland 698	19266250	+13/10	+.5/30	+87/1	+155/1	+35/3	+1.30/3	+.90/10	+214/1	+333/1	+148/14	+166/1	+281/3
GAR Sure Fire 358	19266216	+13/10	+.7/35	+73/5	+136/3	+26/40	+1.03/10	+.95/10	+203/1	+324/1	+167/2	+143/11	+281/3
GAR Sure Fire 538	19266234	+10/20	+.3/30	+67/15	+135/3	+36/2	+1.85/1	+.42/70	+192/1	+315/1	+150/12	+162/2	+280/4
GAR Proactive 1278	19266308	+15/2	-1.3/10	+74/4	+141/2	+23/65	+1.09/10	+.99/10	+198/1	+321/1	+161/4	+148/7	+279/4
GAR Prodigy 1558	19266335	+13/10	+.9/40	+79/2	+138/2	+26/40	+1.69/1	+.90/10	+202/1	+311/1	+134/38	+174/1	+273/6

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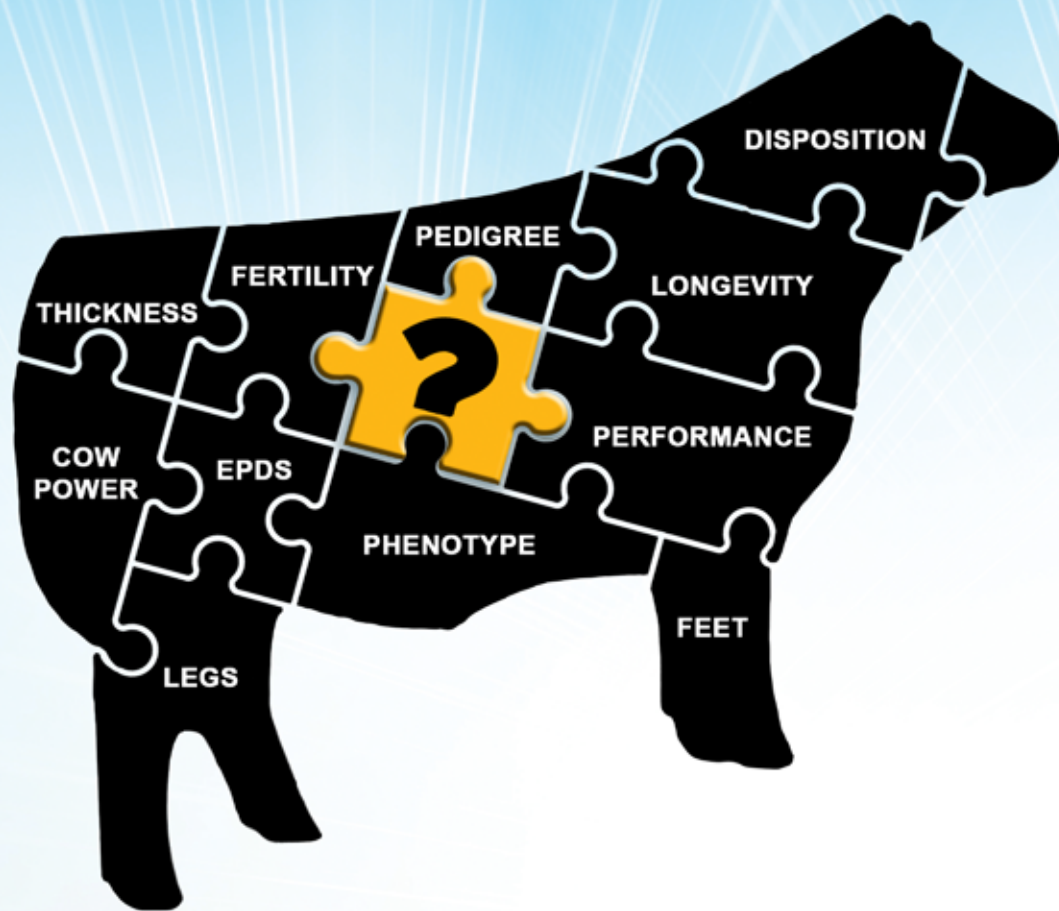
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