

# AIMS Tech Notes

by Scott Johnson, director of Angus Information Management Software



## New training video available

The Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) Department has a new, two-hour instructional video for Crystal Report Writer. It demonstrates the basics of creating your own reports from scratch.

Crystal is a program (separate from AIMS) that we offer for \$120. We didn't write it; we're just a user and a vendor.

All of the existing AIMS reports were created with Crystal; however, it is not required that you have it on your computer to print them. You may want to buy Crystal if you want to change an existing report or to create your own. Crystal is a daunting program to learn if you are not familiar with report-writer software. But it is extremely powerful and adds a lot of versatility to AIMS.

You can purchase the video for \$25. It won't teach you everything, but it is a great way to get started.

## Backups

No matter how many times I write about it, we still get calls that include the question, "How do I make a backup?" Assuming this is the first time you've read "AIMS Tech Notes," let me briefly explain.

Losing a lot of data and not having a backup can make you literally sick to your stomach. The beauty of AIMS is that it makes backups easily. It only takes three clicks of the mouse on these commands: File, Backup, Save. Try it now, before you continue reading.

... Welcome back. You just made a backup and saved it in the default folder on your hard disk. It's a great idea to make this type of backup after every user session of AIMS.

By the way, right before you click on Save, you can name the file something besides the generic, default name. Make it descriptive, such as "Monday" or "Before Performance Update." You can make backups anytime; I recommend doing them right before any AIMS process, such as importing performance updates, expected progeny difference (EPD) updates and additional animals.

The next level of backup is saving to a 3.5-inch (in.) floppy disk. This is important so

you are protected from a hard-disk crash. I would do these once a week or at least once a month.

Finally, you should take one of the floppy disks to a different building to protect your data from catastrophes that may destroy your house or office. It sounds dramatic, but it will seem smart if something happens.

One more piece of advice: Send a floppy disk to us as a final precaution. In addition to storing it off-site for you, we will test it to be sure the backup worked. There has been more than one case of folks thinking they were making backups, but something was wrong with the process or the disk, and they had multiple copies of backups that did not work.

In a recent example, some AIMS users had to restart with a new herd file from the Association. It cost \$25, and they still lost all of their personalized information, such as breeding records, comments and medical recordings.

It's easy to make a backup, so do it often. To recover the information when something goes wrong, you simply do File, Restore, point to the file, then click Open.

## Some questions and answers

**Q.** *When I enter yearling and bull test information, then try to run calculations, the computer gives me a "division by 0 error." What's wrong?*

This error results from a misinterpretation of the bull test fields, mainly the Date field, which is the date the bull went on test. In fact, you'll notice the label actually says "Date (on-test)."

In addition, the yearling weigh date is stored in the Weigh Date field of the Yearling tab. If you enter the same dates in both fields, the computer tries to calculate how long the bull was on test, and it gets zero.

Computers don't like to divide by zero; in fact, they just crash. We are going to add some code to the software to prevent that, but the problem remains if the same date is entered in both fields. Just pay attention to the labels, and you'll be fine.

**Q.** *I imported additional animals and in the process wiped out existing weaning and yearling data. Was I incorrect to use the "Update Existing Animal" button while adding animals?*

No, this is actually a situation that was created by the new EPD pricing policy and a problem in how animals were put into the import file. There isn't room to explain the whole situation, but there are two things you should know and do.

1. Always make a backup before you import additional animals. Even without the problem, it's a good idea because many things happen during the import process, and a backup protects you if something goes wrong.
2. Avoid using the Update Existing Animal button until we have a patch file or figure out another way around the problem.

**Q.** *I purchased the Angus Herd Management Software (AHMS) many years ago but haven't used it. Can I still upgrade to AIMS?*

Yes. The cost is still \$50 to upgrade from AHMS to AIMS, and you probably will want to get a new version of your data file, which costs \$25. So, for only \$75, you can take advantage of the improvements to AIMS, enjoy the benefits of electronic file transfer and have the data on your own computer.

But don't wait too long. In the near future, we will be eliminating our ability to import data from AHMS. I don't know if it's even possible, due to year-2000 (Y2K) problems, to use the old software still, but we can't support it forever.

## One last note:

Be sure to check the AIMS Web site at [www.angus.org/aims](http://www.angus.org/aims) for the latest news from our department. It's a great way to get information between issues of the *Angus Journal* and to get it 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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