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## Feeder-calf program update

*There's been a lot of talk out in the country about the Association's new feeder-calf program. Folks are excited about the opportunities it will present for both their operations and their customers'. With the launch of the program scheduled for late summer, I thought it would be a good time to provide an update.*

In November, after the Association completed the acquisition of Verified Beef, the Board appointed a special feeder-calf committee to steward the development of the program. Chaired by Jerry Connealy, the committee of David Dal Porto, James Henderson, Jonathan Perry and Don Schiefelbein has extensive experience with the cow-calf and fed-cattle segments.

The committee, along with staff members assigned to the project, have spent the last several months working and collaborating closely as a team to ensure that the final program meets the needs of the industry.

One outcome of all of their work was a revision that was made to the initial concept regarding the participation requirements. Initially, less than 40% of the bull battery was required to be registered Angus bulls. That's not the case any longer, however. The requirements have been revised to require that the bull battery consist of a minimum of 50% registered Angus bulls, with a total of 75% of the bull battery being registered bulls. No more than 25% of the battery may be unregistered, and any unregistered bulls must have a DNA profile.

Another revision to the program involved the indexes that will be provided for feeder calves. The

revised indexes will provide Feedlot Performance and Grid Value scores. In addition, the two scores will



contribute to a total Beef Value.

Note that the three indexes will be correlated to \$F, \$G and \$B, which makes sense as breeders have been using the dollar value indexes (\$Values) to breed cattle, and commercial buyers have been making purchase decisions based on those values for years.

In addition to the indexes for cattle being sold as feeders, the program will also provide a Female Replacement Index that will be correlated to \$W. The feeder-cattle indexes will be a direct link to the Association's \$Values.

### Angus Link

The reference to a "direct link" is a good segue to the name of the new program. After reviewing a

number of options, the Board voted unanimously to approve the name Angus Link™. The name reinforces the link between the feeder calves and the registered Angus bulls used to produce them; the link between the cow-calf and fed-cattle segments; and, most importantly, the link between the American Angus Association and the commercial sector.

Now that the indexes have been finalized, work is ongoing in a number of key areas. First and foremost is reconfiguring the Verified Beef software platform to fit the requirements of the Angus Link program. At the same time, software design is occurring with the online registration landing page and the mobile enrollment platform. Of course, there's still much work to do in finalizing the product positioning and promotional campaign that will create awareness in the marketplace.

The ultimate goal of the Angus Link feeder-cattle program is to build upon the use of registered Angus bulls that tie calves back to superior Angus genetics — linking Angus breeders and commercial producers together.



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