

by Allen Moczygemba
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A world of change

We live in a world of constant change. Of course, that's not necessarily news as each generation has said that since Noah and his sons loaded up their boat with every creature they could rope and drag on board.

I mention this because although change is a constant in our lives, most of us don't particularly like it. Some will claim that they "embrace change," but the fact of the matter is that most folks don't. Change isn't always comfortable, and sometimes it can be difficult to accept.

As you've probably heard by now, the American Angus Association Board of Directors recently voted to make changes later this year with the dollar value indexes (\$Values). Our current indexes have been in place since 2004. And while they've served this breed well, there are areas that needed to be updated.

Updated indexes

Beginning this June, there will be a new model for beef value (\$B). The new \$B model shares a lot of similarities to the existing one, with a correlation above 0.90. As a result, the new \$B model will rank animals in a similar manner to today. \$B will continue to predict expected profitability differences due to feedlot and carcass merit using multi-trait genetic selection for post-weaning gain, feed efficiency and carcass value. However, there are changes in trait emphasis with a greater emphasis on marbling and

yield, lessening the emphasis on carcass weight.


Second, there will be a new maternal weaned calf value (\$M) released this June that will include additional maternal traits compared to our current weaned calf value (\$W) model. The underlying breeding objective behind this new maternal index remains relatively unchanged. \$M will predict pre-weaning profitability assuming breeders keep a portion of their female progeny as replacements and sell the rest of the progeny, both males and females, as feeder calves. While the exact distribution of traits is yet to be finalized by the Board, those traits will include calving ease (direct and maternal), weaning weight, cow size, milk, docility, heifer pregnancy and foot scores. The new \$M will account for maternal traits not originally included in \$W.

The current \$Values for quality grade (\$QG) and yield grade (\$YG) will be eliminated this June as they are duplicative to expected progeny differences (EPDs) currently in place. (\$QG is redundant to the marbling EPD, while \$YG is redundant to fat and ribeye area EPDs).

Also effective in June, all \$Values will be rounded to whole dollars,

eliminating the decimals or cents portion of each \$Value.

Finally, the Board approved a yet-to-be-named balanced index that will be representative of the entire production cycle. The balanced index will be comprised of all traits included in the \$M and \$B indexes. While we all wish that folks would consider the entire suite of EPDs when making their buying and breeding decisions, the fact of the matter is that some folks choose to simplify the selection process by focusing on one or a few values. For those producers, the balanced index will better represent the profitability of the entire beef industry, maintaining the optimal balance between both maternal and terminal traits. The balanced trait index is expected to be released in June 2020.

Are we simply changing for the sake of change? No. We're changing to improve our current \$Value indexes. And improvement has always been what America's breed is all about. 

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