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Keep the data coming

Angus breeders have been pioneers in collecting weights and measures that generate selection tools to advance the breed and the industry.

The massive number of phenotypic records in the American Angus Association database is what has enabled genomic technology to be developed and, ultimately, increase the accuracy of our predictions and expected progeny differences (EPDs). But the future accuracy of these tools is threatened if breeders don't continue turning in high-quality data.

I understand the temptation. A genomic profile can establish an EPD accuracy that would have historically required many progeny records. If the EPDs don't drastically move when an animal record is turned in after genomics, it's easy to think, "What's the point?" That temptation gets even greater when there is real cost and effort tied to those animal records.

To advance Angus EPDs and selection tools for maternal traits like longevity and fertility, there is a significant need for increased data collection on the cow herd. MaternalPlus® has been a great start, and I compliment those committed breeders who have enrolled. Breeding records, disposal codes, foot scores and other critical data allows Angus to build improved maternal EPDs that I know many breeders and commercial customers are asking for.

In fiscal year 2019, 305,000 head were registered by 13,000 members. Of those members, 51% turned in birth weights, 35% weaning weights, 30% genomic tests, 13% ultrasound records and only 3% breeding records.

During the last two years, we have seen ultrasound data go down by 18% and turned in by 14% fewer herds. Clearly the trend is troublesome. Many of you have shared your concerns on this topic, and most will agree this needs to be addressed for the betterment of the Angus breed.

A closer look

In November 2019 a task force was formed of Association staff and members of the Board. The primary focus is to explore options in the "bundling" of current Association and Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI®) fees that could incentivize inventory-based reporting and ultimately increase data submission. The task force will explore ways to recognize breeders who submit data and highlight animals with phenotypic records. The group will also look at options to elevate the member experience in registration, potentially making it easier to submit data through improved processes and payment.


To maintain Association programs and a high level of customer service, the task force is also charged with evaluating trends in the Association revenue model and how changes to fees and services affect long-term financial sustainability.

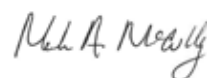
Currently a two-system model is envisioned — the existing "a la carte" model and a "bundled," inventory-based option. There is no consideration being given

to make any changes mandatory to members. MaternalPlus is our existing inventory-based, whole-herd reporting system. Any new systems would likely be modifications to it with incentives to participate.

The task force is exploring all options and looking at existing fees and services associated with registering an animal. These fees include Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) weights, registrations, transfers, embryo transfer (ET) authorization, artificial insemination (AI) certificates and genomic testing.

This work is still in the exploratory stages, and absolutely no decisions have been made. The task force will continue to work through this, and recommendations will be presented to all directors in future board meetings.

While much thought needs to be given to how we accomplish the goal of increasing quality data submission, I am optimistic we will find a smart path forward that benefits the breed. I'm incredibly grateful for dedicated breeders of the past who have diligently submitted weights and records to build the incredible data advantage the Angus breed enjoys today. I have no doubt that dedication will continue and keep Angus squarely positioned for success. 



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