

# THE DATA DIVE

by Esther Tarpoff, director of performance programs

## Hair shed data: Where does it come from?

*The hair shed EPD helps Angus producers select for heat tolerance.*

Do you produce cattle in an environment where heat can be a concern? Are you in a portion of the United States that grazes endophyte-infested fescue? Have you learned about the hair shed (HS) expected progeny difference (EPD) on registered Angus cattle?

Early shedding of the winter hair coat is an indicator for better heat tolerance in the summer as well as increased tolerance to endophyte-

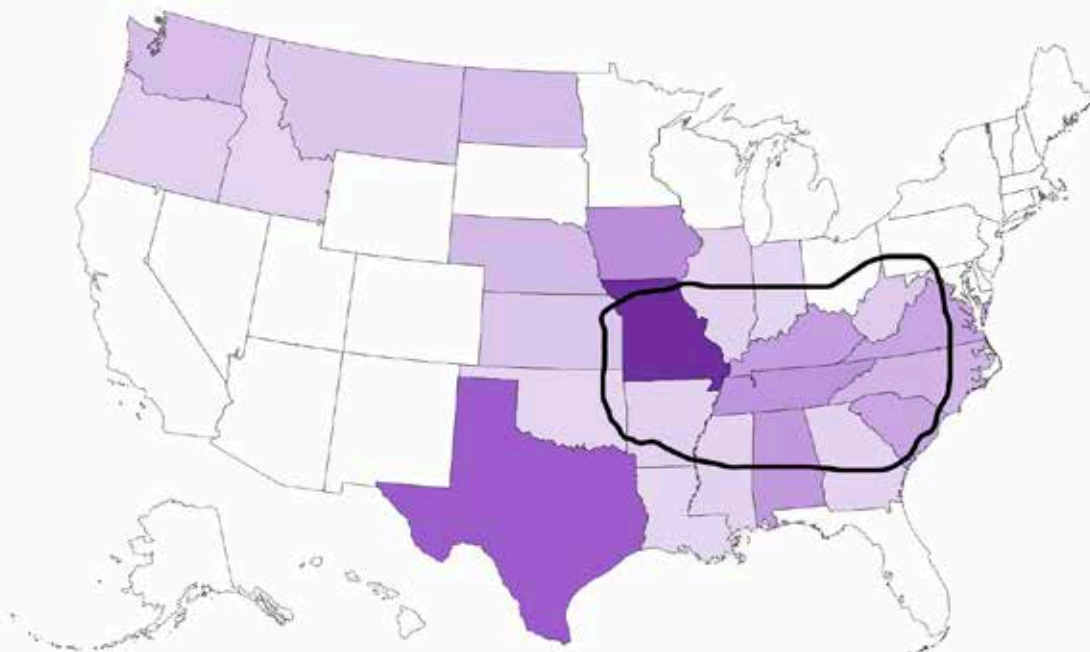
infested fescue. In May 2022 the American Angus Association released the HS EPD into production in the national cattle evaluation (NCE). Hair shed is a moderately heritable trait ( $h^2 = 0.36$ ).

Research started in 2008, supported by the Angus Foundation, to collect data on hair shed over a two-year period. During that time, scores were collected on nearly 5,300 females that were in 20 states across

the Southeast, Missouri and Texas. These females ranged in age from 2 to more than 10 years old. About half of the females were scored two times, once each year of the two-year period, which allowed for a repeatability model to be utilized, meaning animals can have multiple scores throughout their lifetime and each of those scores can be used.

Research demonstrated a negative correlation between body condition

**Figure 1:** Hair shed scores by state with the approximate fescue belt area in the United States circled.



and hair shed, suggesting as animals retain more of their winter hair coat, their body condition decreased. Research also showed calves from early-shedding cows weighed approximately 24 pounds more at 205 days of age compared with calves from late-shedding cows, likely due to late-shedding cows using energy for body temperature regulation vs. production.

## How to evaluate

Hair shed is evaluated visually on a 1-to-5 scale. An animal scoring a 1 for hair shed has completely lost her winter coat. A score of 5 represents an animal that has not started to shed their winter hair. Scores should be collected in the spring (April through June) when there is the most variation in hair shedding in your herd. The same person should score the entire group for consistency.

Hair shed is a trait that can be evaluated while out checking the herd or even while moving animals from one pasture to the next. Cattle need to be at least in the yearling age window (minimum of 320 days of age) or older when scoring.

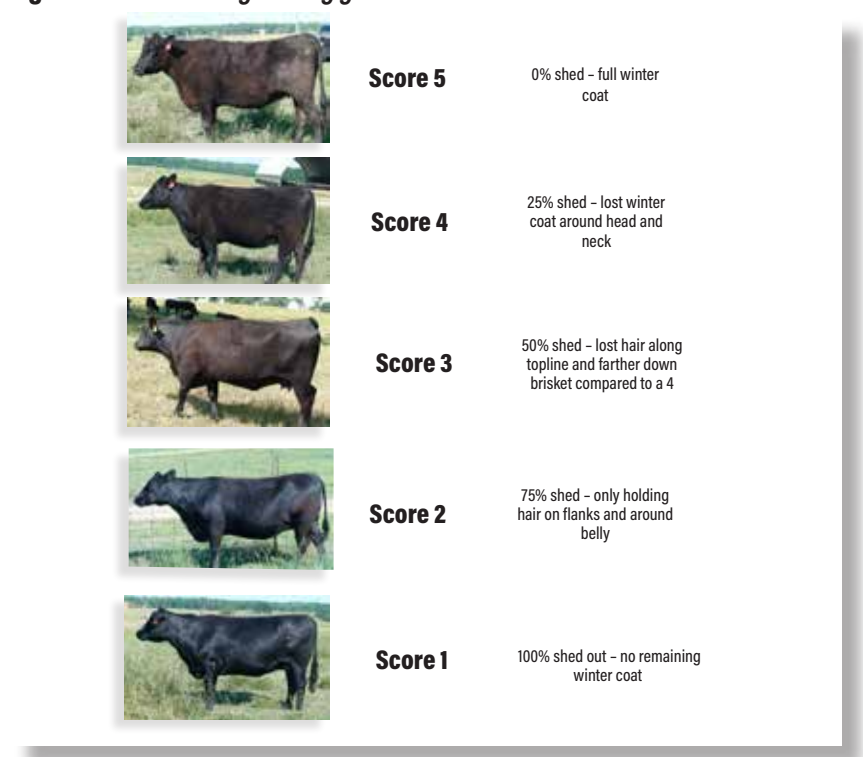
The Association has a hair shed scoring guide available as well as a “how-to” video with explanations of scores while looking at examples. This is all available on [www.angus.org/university](http://www.angus.org/university) under Resources > Tools and Services > AHIR.

## Hair shed data

With the release of the EPD almost a year ago, how many records are in the NCE and where do we see herds hair shed scoring and submitting data to Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®)?

Currently there are more than 27,000 hair shed scores in the NCE.

**Figure 2: Hair shedding scoring guide**




The majority of the records come from states located in the Fescue Belt or the Southeast. Figure 1 shows by state where hair shed scores are being recorded and submitted to the Association, with the approximate Fescue Belt area in the United States circled.

In this figure the darker the state color, the more records from that state, with Missouri having the most records, followed by Texas. States in the Fescue Belt such as Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, Alabama, etc. also have numerous records for hair shed in the evaluation, as hair shed affects production of cattle grazing hot fescue.

While there are more than 27,000 records in the NCE, there have been more than 30,000 records recorded in AHIR. Why are some records not included in the NCE? One of the most common reasons is lack of

variation of scores in a group. This can be attributed to not scoring the group at the optimum time when there is the most variation.

If you are interested in scoring your herd for hair shed, we would encourage you to review the hair shed scoring guidelines provided by the Association. It also can be helpful to keep a guide close by in case you need to reference example photos while scoring. 

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### SCAN FOR MORE

on the the hair shed scoring guide available or visit [www.angus.org/university/resources/ToolsAndServices](http://www.angus.org/university/resources/ToolsAndServices)

