

from the office

LEAD IN

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This issue of the ANGUS JOURNAL highlights the 5th Pathfinder Report, one of two major performance reports issued annually by your association. The second report, included in the October ANGUS JOURNAL, is the National Angus Sire Evaluation.

As we review performance programs of today it's interesting to reflect back a few years to 1957 when the AHIR program started with Angus Herd Classification. Weighing and grading started one year later. The last 25 years have been an exciting time in Angus history as we have witnessed the foundation, formation and change of what has evolved today into one of the most comprehensive performance programs in the industry.

After its inception in 1957, Herd Classification was a highly promoted breed program for 15 years. Animals were evaluated subjectively and compared to a breed ideal by official classifiers for the association. Only after analysis of the subjective evaluation and its relevance to actual production traits was the program deleted from Angus performance work. The findings evidenced that the correlation of eyeball appraisal to actual productivity were low to nonexistent thus the program of subjective evaluation was terminated in the early 70s.

The age of computers came to your association in 1962 with purchase of a Honey

well H-400 system. A computer and the ability to enter a storehouse of data provided the real beginning of performance for the association. Performance in the early 60s was new, and with anything new came skepticism of its value to the industry. During those first five years of record keeping, less than 10,000 total weights were processed through AHIR.

Then, in 1967 a major step in performance work took place—the first Angus Performance Pedigree was issued. If you forget those first APP's, the only information printed was the data accumulated within your own herd; there was no across-herd data summarized. In looking at one of the pedigrees, you'd quickly note that individual performance and average weaning and yearling ratios of progeny were the main data available, but for the time it was a revolutionary step in performance work.

The Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) had its beginning in 1968 when leaders in the industry met to discuss ideas for the performance movement. Extension and college personnel, research leaders and breed organizations together built BIF, currently the industry leader for development, standardization and promotion of all performance programs available.

In 1971 a second and more advanced computer, a Honeywell H-1250, was purchased by your association. But most importantly, that year, the association issued the first Breeding Values for Angus cattle; this was just 11 years ago.

Open A.I. for the Angus breed came in 1972, allowing the widespread use of top bulls across the breed and the real growth of Angus records. During the period from 1962 to 1972 Angus breeders were becoming actively involved in weighing their calves at weaning and yearling; during this period 371,393 more weights were processed through AHIR. Comparing this to the present, Angus breeders processed more records in the past two years than in the previous ten. A total of 179,703 weights were processed in 1981, and 1982 weights will easily take us over the 200,000 mark!

Structured Sire Evaluation was started in 1971 with the breeding of 25 bulls in commercial test herds. The first report was printed in the fall of 1974; it included data

on 17 test bulls and 8 reference sires. Sire Evaluation represented an unbiased report and used Expected Progeny Differences for the first time to evaluate bulls.

In 1975 a dedicated effort was made to acquire permission from all Angus breeders to use their AHIR records for breed-wide programs, such as performance pedigrees and across-herd breeding values. The long range goal of this effort was to open all records of performance for across-herd programs and breed improvement.

The first Pathfinder Report was issued in 1978. It included records from across the breed and listed 1,129 cows and 12 bulls. The program was the first effort to recognize cows on the basis of three important economical factors—fertility, regularity of calving and milk production as measured by weaning weight. The program has proven successful in identifying cows superior in these important traits as well as breeders who are involved in keeping records of performance.

The AHIR Herd Recognition Program was launched in 1979 and in the same year the association purchased an on-line system in the Honeywell Level 64 computer. This system has given us tremendous flexibility with our performance work, as well as improved efficiency and better turn-around time to the membership.

The Angus Sire Evaluation Report highlighted 1981. The report listed a total of 673 bulls evaluated for traits of importance to the industry, including birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, carcass data and maternal breeding value. This was made possible by two factors—over 1.5 million records on AHIR and open A.I. I'm sure we'll look back to 1981 and consider this one of the most important, if not the most important, programs ever adopted by the Angus breed.

Where to from here? Breeders, your board of directors, staff and consultant, Dr. Richard Willham, have made a dedicated effort to offer and improve the most comprehensive programs available for breed improvement. I believe all involved have met that challenge over the past 25 years. It's your challenge as individual breeders to utilize the programs available. Take advantage of them as a part of your total herd improvement.

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