

AIMS Tech Notes

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Updating EPDs and the National Sire Evaluation database

Soon after you get this issue of the *Angus Journal*, the Fall 2000 National Sire Evaluation (NSE) will be released by the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) department. As soon as the data are online at the Association, we can run herd updates for the Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) with the new expected progeny differences (EPDs) for all of your eligible animals. Here's a reminder of the steps:

- In AIMS, click on File, Data, Export Files;
- Change the operation to EPD Requests;
- Change the file destination (where the file will be saved), if necessary, next to Filename;
- Select the All Animals pen; and
- Click on the Export button.

Although you can select a pen of animals, it is generally best to use the All Animals pen so every animal in your system is updated, active or not. The cost is the same (\$15) no matter how many animals are in the file.

The final location of the export file—which starts with E, then your member code—is partially dependent on how you intend to send the file. If you want to e-mail it as an attachment or send it by direct modem, it may as well stay on the hard disk (default location). If you plan to send it on a floppy disk, you can change the destination to the "a:" drive before you export the file.

Once we have received the file, we run the process to create a file that is returned to you. At that point, you click on File, Data, Import Files; change the operation to EPD Updates; and use the Browse button next to the Filename field to select the file we sent back to you. It may be on a disk or saved as an attachment from your e-mail system. (Saving e-mail attachments is a whole 'nother issue; see the March 2000 "Tech Notes.") You can send us this request file before the deadline, and we will assume you want us to hold the file until the new data are released.

When the new EPDs are released, you probably will want to update your NSE database (found under Tools, National Sire Evaluation). This is the same information found in the Internet sire summary, as well as the printed version mailed in the fall.

As soon as the data are available, we will post the file on the Internet, starting at www.angus.org/aims. Specific instructions are available at the NSE site (look for the link from the AIMS page). Getting the file by this means is free except for the access time it

takes for the Internet download. You can get the necessary file and update program from us on 3.5-inch floppy disk or on CD. In these two cases, there is a charge of \$10.

Learn about AIMS

Most of you are not working much with AIMS during the summer—there's too much to do outside and not much recordkeeping required. You can learn new things about AIMS in the meantime by reading the user's manual. It's on the CD you used to install AIMS.

In the early days, software came with several books on how to install and to use it. Some packages took up a foot of shelf space because they had so many manuals. With the popularity of CD-ROM drives in today's computers, most software packages now come with "online books," meaning they are electronically stored on the CD.

A CD can hold 650 MB of information—that's a lot. As an example, the 141-page AIMS manual is 2.3 MB, which means it would fit on the CD 278 times.

We put our manual on the CD as an electronic file. This saved us the expense of printing a manual and mailing it to you; and let's face it, the vast majority of us, me included, don't read the manual anyway.

The file format is Adobe Acrobat, which is a commonly available, free program on the Internet. It opens files with the ".pdf" (portable document format) extension. This assures everyone that the formatting (margins, layout, fonts, etc.) is exactly what we intended. Just to make sure you have the Acrobat program, we put it on the CD, too. (It's legal, we checked.)

If you already have Acrobat installed on your computer, here's how you can open the file (try this even if you're not sure about Acrobat).

- Double click on the My Computer icon on your desktop;
- Double click on the CD-ROM drive, probably labeled drive "d:";
- Open the folder on the CD called Help (double click on it or click on the "+" sign);
- Open the folder under Help called HelpPDF; and
- Double click on the aims20.pdf file.

If your computer doesn't know what program to use to open the file, you need to install Acrobat, so back up and do this:

- Open the Help folder on the CD again;

- Double click on the adobe.bat file (there might be two files just labeled "adobe"—use either one).
- This should start the process to install Acrobat on your computer. Once this is done, try the previous section to open the aims20.pdf file.

You can browse the file on the screen or print it. If you only want part of the file, just print the pages you want. To do this, click on the File command, then Print, then tell it what range of pages you want.

The whole point of the exercise is to read about AIMS. I guarantee you will learn things you didn't know. AIMS is a comprehensive recordkeeping program, and if you have focused on certain features, like registrations or performance data, you may not realize it can do things like medical records, customer-name management, simulated breeding and user-defined weights beyond weaning and yearling, just to name a few.

I realize you may not have much time during the summer to "play." But if you'll dedicate a few minutes or hours to this project, I guarantee it will make you a better AIMS user.

One more thing about the user manual—it's the same information that makes up the Help system in AIMS. In other words, you can start AIMS, click on Help, then Contents, and you will see the same chapters. You can browse and learn new things here, too. It's your choice.

Please take some time to read the manual. You'll be amazed at what you can find. In fact, you may try it for other programs, too.

National Junior Angus Show (NJAS)

I will have a demonstration of AIMS at the NJAS in Des Moines, Iowa. Tentatively, it's scheduled for Wednesday, July 12, in the Sales Arena. As an added bonus, I'm looking into the possibility of a Crystal Reports workshop that Saturday morning. For those of you who will be at the show, check the final schedule in the official show book. If you think you would attend only for the workshops, give us a call closer to the show date to verify the scheduling.

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