by AGI staff
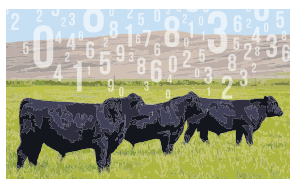
Angus $Value Visioning Project

Angus Genetics Inc.'s (AGI's) project to rebuild Angus dollar value indexes ($Values)

has a significant survey component and is seeking participation

from Angus breeders and their commercial customers.

The *American Angus Association Sire Evaluation Report* currently displays 18 expected progeny differences (EPDs) and seven $Values. These $Values, also called economic indexes or selection indexes, were originally implemented in 2004 when beef value ($B), feedlot value ($F) and grid value ($G) appeared for the first time in the spring sire summary.

Over time, the available $Values have been expanded with cow energy value ($EN) and weaned calf value ($W) added in Spring 2005. Fall 2007 added the primary components of grid value ($G) — quality grade value ($QG) and yield grade value ($YG). The $Values remain current by updating the economic assumptions behind the models such as the price of beef, feed and grid premiums based on analyses of industry trends.

Beyond the annual update to economic assumptions, new traits
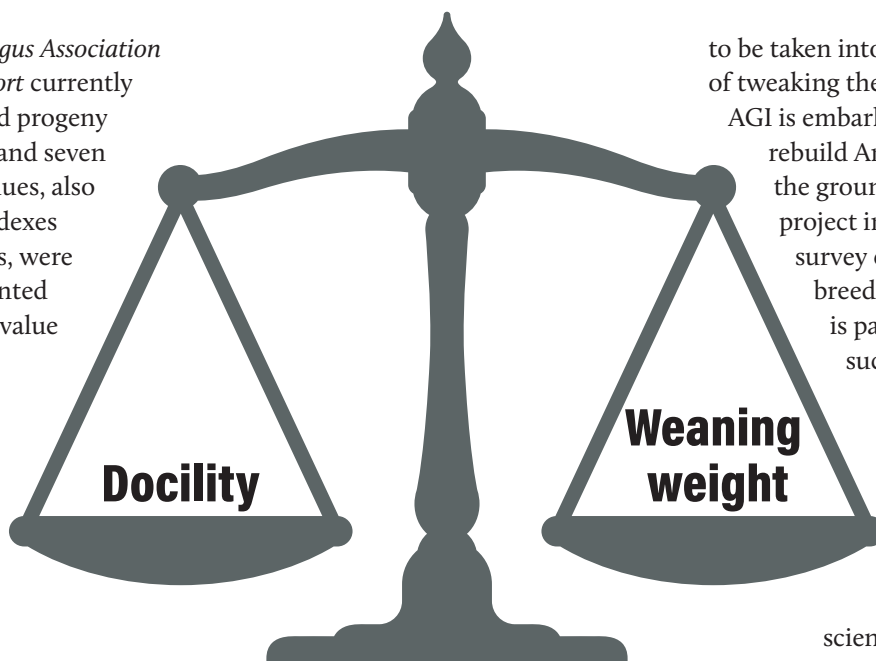
— such as the addition of feed intake in 2014 — have been included. Although updated annually, the base model behind the $Values is now 14 years old and remains relatively unchanged since its inception.

Rebuilding Angus $Values

With new EPDs now in place, such as heifer pregnancy and docility, their impact on the $Values needs to be taken into account. Instead of tweaking the current models, AGI is embarking on a project to rebuild Angus's $Values from the ground up. Part of this project includes a significant survey component, and breeder participation is paramount to the success of the project. AGI has teamed up with AbacusBio Ltd. for this $Value rebuild project. The New Zealand-based agricultural science consulting company works across a broad spectrum of the agricultural industry and is a world leader in the development of economic selection indexes.

Since 1994 AbacusBio Ltd. has experience developing indexes across a broad range of species and countries making their largest impacts on sheep, dairy and beef cattle across New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Combined farm-gate value

of the industries directed by the economic selection indexes created by AbacusBio represents about $43 billion annually, roughly the proportion of the U.S. beef industry that is influenced by Angus genetic-selection decisions.

AGI reached out to work with AbacusBio on this project, partly due to their track record and experience, but also because of their unique approach.

In developing their indexes, AbacusBio employs a survey component seeking to determine industry and breeder preferences. Combined with known industry economics, breeder preferences can be used to create indexes that best align with what breeders want, while still being economically sound. For indexes to have maximum impact they need to be used, and through this consultation process the industry can have direct input into their development.

The Australian dairy industry employed AbacusBio to redevelop their national selection indexes. Through their industry survey, it was determined that farmers fell into three broad categories in terms of their desired selection emphasis. As a result, three indexes were created: a balanced performance index, another with more weight on health traits and a third with more emphasis on conformation traits. The result is greater overall acceptance of the indexes and more adoption. The farmers are saying that when they look at bull lists ranked on index value for their preferred index, the bulls that they would expect to see are appearing at the top of the lists — a sign that the index is doing a good job of describing their preferences and is likely to be used.

Seeking input

Angus breeders saw a request to complete a survey in their inbox in June 2018. The survey captures input not just from Angus breeders, but also from commercial cow-calf and feedlot operations.

There are two components to the survey, including demographics and a trait preference portion. The trait preference section employs software called 1000minds, which dynamically administers different questions to each respondent based on the answers provided — how a breeder responds to a question will determine what subsequent questions are asked.

An example of a trait preference question is provided below. In this instance, a trait like docility is difficult to assign to an economic value when using traditional economic modeling methods. Breeders will all agree that cattle with better temperament are preferred. By asking breeders how they would trade temperament against traits like milk, the economic impacts of which are well-understood, the effect of traits like docility can be determined.

Rebuilding Angus's $Values is a large and very important project. It will set the genetic direction of the Angus breed, and as a result, the U.S. beef industry. Such a project typically only comes around once a decade or so.

As breeders, now is your chance to have your say. Please take the time to complete the survey and encourage your commercial customers to do the same via the link on *Angus.org.* You will need to set aside up to 30 minutes to complete the survey, but the value of doing so is that your opinion will be heard, and you will contribute to setting the overall direction of the Angus breed. AJ

We're seeking industry input.

Question # 2

Which of these 2 (hypothetical) alternatives do you prefer?

Docility
8 more heifers per 100 suitable as replacements because of good temperament

Milk
20 lbs more weaning weight because of cow milking ability

this one   OR   this one

they are equal

« undo last decision   skip this question for now »