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Reinforcing the value of Angus genetics
Angus LinkSM is the first major initiative for the American Angus Association since the creation of Angus Genetics Inc., and over the past several months, I've devoted a lot of space in this column to this new feeder-cattle program.

Covering this topic hasn't been by accident. There's much riding on the program and, as a result, it's important the membership be fully informed of the program and how it will work.

With the launch of Angus Link occurring within the coming weeks, I thought it would be wise to spend some time on the program's scores.

Angus Link scores

Angus Link will be made up of three scores: Beef Score, Feedlot Performance Score and Grid Score. The Feedlot Performance Score and Grid Score will contribute to the Beef Score. The foundation for the program's scores will be the Association's beef value (\$B), feedlot value (\$F) and grid value (\$G) dollar value indexes (\$Values) respectively.

The Beef Score will be driven by carcass weight, marbling and feed efficiency data. The Feedlot Performance Score will emphasize average daily gain and dry-matter intake, while the Grid Score will be a measure of marbling, fat and ribeye area — just as the current \$B, \$F and \$G indexes do.

However, while the \$Values vary over time due to improvements in genetic performance, the scoring system will not. Instead, the annual average score for the industry average feeder calf will be 100 while

Table 1: Angus Link score and \$Value industry averages

Angus Link		American Angus Association \$Value	
Score	Industry Average	Value	Industry Average
Beef	100	\$B	41
Feedlot Performance	100	\$F	3
Grid	100	\$G	17

the scores can range from 0 to 200.

So, why not just use our current index numbers rather than create a new scoring system with an average of 100? There are a number of reasons, but they all tie back to the objective of keeping the program simple. First, it's important to remember that most cattle buyers are not familiar with our expected progeny differences (EPDs) and \$Values. As a result, without a basis for comparison, the current numbers become meaningless to the them.

For example, in Table 1 above the genetic makeup of the typical industry feeder calf has an average \$B value of 41, a \$F value of 3 and a \$G value of 17. However, that's the average. It can get confusing quickly as calves with inferior genetics can actually have negative scores while the calves with high genetic potential for \$B value would be 220, where a \$F value with similar superiority would only be 75, for example. Establishing the average as 100 for each score simplifies the complex.

Second, the scores for a group of feeder cattle need to be interpreted and understood quickly to match the speed of commerce in a sale barn or video sale. As a result, it makes sense to create a scoring system that's easy for cattle buyers to understand and to use.

One other point to keep in mind is that groups of calves that receive a Grid Score of 125 or greater and meet the phenotypic specifications for the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) Program will receive the CAB "Targeting the Brand" logo on their marketing certificate.

In closing, we'll be rolling the program out into the marketplace soon. Angus Link will be good for the Association as it will allow us to further reinforce the value of Angus genetics to the commercial sector.

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