

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



Innovation continues

While COVID-19 has affected nearly every aspect of our lives and businesses, progress and innovation continue at the American Angus Association.

I want to highlight a couple of newer initiatives that offer some exciting benefits to the Angus breed and Association members.

Haplotypes

The research team at Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) has been working on haplotypes affecting fertility for some time, and I hope you've seen some of the various articles and educational resources they've produced in the past. While it is a new and very technical subject, we have worked hard to keep everyone informed. Just last month a great article by Duc Lu was in the *Angus Journal*, and I would highly encourage you to go back and read "By the Numbers" if you missed it.

We all understand the huge economic significance of fertility in the cattle business. Historically cattle breeders have struggled to make genetic progress in fertility and reproduction traits because the heritability is low. Identifying haplotypes that influence fertility is a new approach the dairy industry has been researching for years, allowing them to make great strides in improving pregnancy rates. Because Angus has a significant database of genomically tested animals, we are in an enviable position to identify haplotypes that inhibit fertility while they exist at a low frequency and make progress improving fertility where other breeds cannot.


As haplotypes are discovered, it is imperative breeders approach them with a different mindset than genetic conditions. I truly hope the marketplace will react logically and rationally. We shouldn't devalue cattle of high genetic merit simply because they carry a haplotype affecting fertility, but rather use the information to make corrective matings and move forward. The Angus breed benefits from more genetic diversity, not less, so using haplotypes as breeding tools and not strict culling criteria will be of paramount importance to not restricting the Angus gene pool.

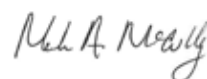
Again, this is a new and promising advancement in breeding beef cattle and Angus is on the cutting edge. We will work to keep our breeders and members informed as the technology and research progress.

Angus on dairy

A second area of research has been around an index specific for the beef-on-dairy market. Most are probably aware of the significant amount of beef semen being used on dairy cows. It is estimated half or more of the 9 million dairy cows in the United States will be bred to have a beef-cross calf. It's also estimated of the beef semen used on dairy, registered Angus bulls comprise about 75% of the market. This market has been an important part of the Angus economy for the past few years.

To maintain and grow this market share, the Board decided to develop indexes specific for this market. In June, the AGI Board approved the release of two Angus-on-dairy dollar value indexes — one for use on Holstein cows and the other for Jersey cows. Stephen Miller has authored a "By the Numbers" article, found on pages 34-35, in this issue that will explain these indexes in detail. I anticipate the indexes will be well accepted by participants in the beef-on-dairy marketplace and will further support Angus demand.

Both the haplotype research and the new dairy indexes are progressive and innovative. I believe they represent an Association that is embracing the future and providing tools for a variety of breeders and segments of the industry. With these types of significant innovation, questions always arise. As always, we are available to answer any questions that you may have and will continue to provide timely resources for you. 



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Editor's note: The Angus-on-dairy indexes are available through public lookup by registration number on all AI sires and non-parent bulls, but these indexes will not be included on the registration paper. Visit AGI's website at www.angus.org/AGI/ for more information.

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