

# THE DATA DIVE

by Esther Tarpoff, director of performance programs

## Teat Size and Udder Suspension

*As we approach fall calving, are you ready to collect high-quality records on your females?*

Anyone who has been around during calving season knows full well there is nothing better than watching a wobbly-legged newborn calf nurse for the first time. There is nothing more frustrating than having to take a new calf and dam to the barn to milk the cow's udder out.

Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) now has a place to record dam teat size and udder suspension scores recorded at calving time.

### Why score udders?

Research shows teat size and udder suspension are both moderately heritable, meaning genetic selection is possible. However, just like any trait, collecting phenotypes is the first step to evaluate the genetic component in the population of interest.

While members using the Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) herd management software have had the opportunity to collect phenotypes for several years, members using AAA Login have had these fields available for a couple of calving seasons now.

There are approximately 119,000 scores submitted to AHIR® for each teat size and udder suspension. As research continues, continuing to collect high-quality phenotypes is important to continue to characterize the current population.

### Data collection best practices

#### When to score

Every year a female has a calf, she

can be scored at calving for teat size and udder suspension. The best time to collect these scores is at the same time as birth weights on calves, within 24 hours of calving.

#### How to score

Evaluate all four quarters of the udder. Select the combined worst quarter for both teat size and udder suspension. While both traits are scored on the same quarter, they are scored independently, so they may be different for both traits. Both traits are scored on a scale of 1 to 9.

For teat size, a score of 1 represents a very large and misshapen teat that likely requires assistance for a newborn calf to nurse; while a score of 9 represents a very small teat. For udder suspension, a score of 1 represents a very pendulous udder that would have broken-down median suspensory ligament; while a score of 9 is a very tight udder held very close to the body cavity. Research points to extremes for either trait can have undesirable effects on the calf. Unlike foot scoring, on the scale to score, there is not an "ideal" score for teat size or udder suspension.


Like with any trait that requires subjective scoring, it is extremely important to have the same person scoring an entire group to keep scorer consistency. In addition, it is important to score the two traits for how they truly are at calving, not how you want them to be. Not every female has the same udder.

If you would like to have a scoring guide in hand during calving season, they can be ordered through the Angus brand store online or printed from the website. Some members have said during calving season, they change their phone background to the pictures from the scoring guide for quick reference.

#### How to submit

Scores should be submitted alongside other calf birth data. If submitting records in your AAA Login account, you will see in the calving book a place for scores for the female that birthed the calf (whether the dam or recipient dam). If records are submitted via AIMS or through spreadsheets, you will also find fields alongside calving data.

#### Need a refresher before calving season?

If you need a refresher before calving season, watch our short six-minute video that explains not only how to score, but also shows real-life videos and photos alongside the drawings on the guide to explain how scores were assigned to females. 

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#### SCAN TO READ

Teat Udder Scoring Guideline or visit [www.angus.org/Performance/documents/Teat\\_Udder\\_Scoring\\_Guideline\\_2021.pdf](http://www.angus.org/Performance/documents/Teat_Udder_Scoring_Guideline_2021.pdf)



#### SCAN TO WATCH

"How-to: Udder Scoring Cattle" or visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx2mygTePM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx2mygTePM)

