

# Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president

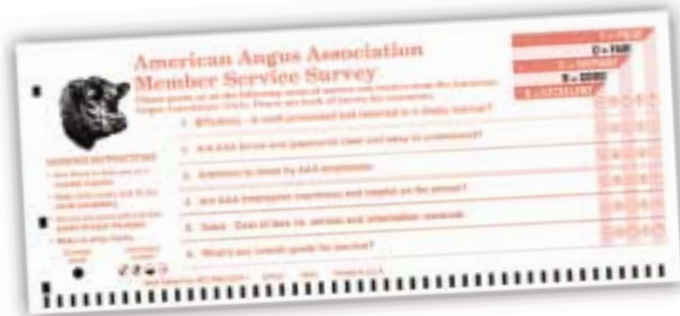


## Survey scores and comments will help improve services

We asked you to evaluate the service we provide, and you did so in a big way. More than 2,600 members completed and returned a questionnaire that was sent with the state ballots to determine delegates for the 2000 Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky. Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete the survey.

The survey was sent to more than 23,000 active life and regular dues-paying members of the Association. More than 11% of you replied to the survey.

We asked you to grade the following areas of service you receive from the American Angus Association: (1) Efficiency. Is work processed and returned in a timely manner? (2) Are American Angus Association forms and paperwork clear and easy to understand? (3) Attention to detail by employees. (4) Are employees courteous and helpful on the phone? (5) Value or cost of fees vs. service and information. (6) What's our overall grade for service?



### Making the grade

The six questions were electronically tabulated when the member survey was received in the office. Most of the surveys accompanied the delegate ballots for the 2000 Annual Meeting, and many were returned in a separate mailing.

The results of the survey ranged from 3.2 to 3.7, with 4.0 as the highest possible score. Efficiency received a 3.6; forms and paperwork, 3.3; attention to detail, 3.5; courteous and helpful, 3.7; value or fees vs. service, 3.2; and overall grade, 3.5. We were pleased with the results that, in educational terms, would have given us an A- or a B+ in

each of the categories scored. Seven hundred thirty-seven members gave us straight A's, and 131 gave us straight B's. We received three straight C's, no straight D's and two straight F's, with everything in between.

### Valuable comments

A number of you also took time to write comments. More than 200 surveys included comments that covered a broad range of subjects — some that pertained to service and some that did not. One person wrote, "The Association is the best service-minded group I ever deal with — and that covers hundreds of offices." Another wrote, "I maintain records on three breeds. The [American Angus] Association staff and service are by far superior."

A number of producers shared similar responses. The general theme seemed to be toward personal service from employees in the office. As one person commented, "Staff is always extra-courteous when called and seem to do everything to be of service."

But not everyone had compliments. One member wrote, "We belong to other breed associations, and the American Angus Association is by far the most expensive breed with less services

provided." Yet another wrote, "The Association generates way too much information — it takes too many hours to decipher and becomes meaningless. EPDs are oversold and overrated." Another wrote, "It's a shame that the Association is more interested in politics and money than it is in seeing that better cattle is our product."

A number of the written responses were constructive toward programs and policies. There seemed to be a sentiment among a number of you that the Association needs a toll-free telephone number for the office. Other comments were directed to fees charged for services, forms being used in the office, errors in work received from the

office, visits by regional managers, artificial insemination (AI) service certificates, ultrasound carcass EPDs and business on the Internet, to name just a few.

Several members asked for general information about being a better Angus breeder. Some of you shared your concern about not knowing the members for whom you were asked to vote on the Association ballot. One member asked for comments on which bulls were best for breeding his cows.

Many of you thanked the Association for asking your opinion. One member wrote, "This survey is one more reason why I like the way you do business."

Some of you asked specific questions, and left your name and address or phone number for a response. We will see that those inquiries are answered. A number of you mentioned employees by name, expressing your appreciation for the extra effort they gave you in answering questions and solving problems.

### Improving services

The survey is one more tool that helps us improve our service to the membership. Your work is one of the tangible assets that every breeder receives. We want to process work, whether in paper form or electronically, in an expedient and thorough way that helps you in the job of breeding, raising and marketing registered Angus cattle.

We're the first to acknowledge that we don't do everything perfectly, but with your input and constructive comments, we'll continue to build on our service-oriented business.

If I may conclude with one more breeder comment, "If our services are as good in the future as they have been in the past, we will be the strongest livestock association that has ever been in existence." That's a goal, and with the collective efforts of everyone involved, I believe it's attainable.

*Richard J. Spader*