A Real Alternative

Real-time coverage provides Angus enthusiasts a way to feel like a part of show activities without being there in person.

by Stephanie Veldman

Andrea Fitzgerald says she hates to travel by airplane, but she loves attending Angus shows and recording the placing from each class.

"I have a hard time getting on a plane to go out to Denver. I hate flying," Fitzgerald says.

Three years ago Fitzgerald found an alternative to attending the show. That year, the Web Marketing Department at Angus Productions Inc. (API) launched a Web site, *www.angusjournal.com/realtime,* that provided real-time coverage of several Angus events. This service has allowed Fitzgerald, and others who can't attend all the shows, the chance to keep up on daily results, and it helps them feel like they are a part of the activities. Fitzgerald says she follows the show results closely on the Web when she isn't able to attend in person.

"There is nothing like being there, for sure, but that is the closest you can get," Fitzgerald says.

Andrea is the wife of Tim Fitzgerald, manager of Fox Cross Farm, Alderson, W.Va. Her family is very involved in the show scene, and they like to keep records of class placings, which Andrea prints directly off the real-time site.

"I will run them off and keep them for future reference. That way we will always know who placed where," Andrea says. She also likes to keep co-owners of their cattle up-to-date, so she will fax the show results she prints off the Web to them.

What is real-time?

Angie Denton, Web marketing director at API, says the real-time

► Angie Denton (right), director of Web marketing, and Tanya Peebles, Web marketing assistant, upload pictures of division champions to the 2002 National Junior Angus Show real-time site.

coverage Web site was introduced at the 2000 National Western Stock Show (NWSS), Denver, Colo. Since then, Denton says the Web marketing team has provided coverage of all five of the super-point ROV shows, as well as coverage of other major Angus events (see Table 1 for a complete listing).

"We started out by putting up the grand and division champions. Since then, we have put up class placings," Denton says.

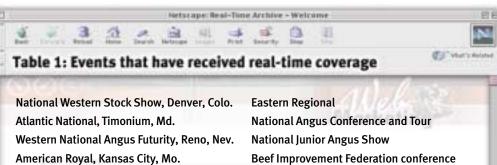She goes on to explain that real-time coverage is not a live feed from the shows, but Internet viewers can usually find complete class placings less than 15 minutes after the class has exited the ring. The information they provide on every animal listed includes entry number, animal name, exhibitor and the sire name. Division and grand champions also have their pictures posted, as do the winning get-of-sire groups and the winners of any special group classes.

Denton says the site is entirely Web-based. There is always a schedule of events for the show posted to give people an idea of when to start watching for class placings. Across the top of the page are tabs for the different animal categories, such as female show and bull show.

Because of the easy access to the Web page and the quick way the information is uploaded onto the site, Denton says that many people watching the show online will know the results before exhibitors can call home.

"My father-in-law uses it a lot because he showed cattle his whole life," Fitzgerald says. "He is always checking up. As soon as we call him after a show, he knows exactly how we did. It leaves no surprises anymore."

Table 1: Events that have received real-time coverage

National Western Stock Show, Denver, Colo.	Eastern Regional
Atlantic National, Timonium, Md.	National Angus Conference and Tour
Western National Angus Futurity, Reno, Nev.	National Junior Angus Show
American Royal, Kansas City, Mo.	Beef Improvement Federation conference
North American International Livestock Exposition, Louisville, Ky.	Cattle Industry Annual Convention

▶Tanya Peebles works at uploading class results onto the Web Marketing Department's real-time site at the National Junior Angus Show, Milwaukee, Wis.

PHOTO BY COURTNEY WIMMER

Teaching tool

Jeff Sherfield, a cow-calf producer from Spencer, Ind., uses the real-time coverage site regularly. He teaches computer classes at Owen Valley Middle School and likes to check the results regularly for the shows he has to miss because of his off-farm job.

"I remember this year at Denver, I was in class at school, but I was checking on data between periods," Sherfield says. "I have checked it every 30-50 minutes before in a show like Denver, when we weren't able to be there."

Sherfield says he also likes to review the results after a show, because he says he misses many of the class placings even when he attends the event.

"As soon as we get home from the show, [the computer] is the first place I stop — to see what I missed," Sherfield says. "If you are showing, you can't watch the show."

Sherfield also uses the real-time coverage site as a teaching tool in his computer class. "I teach my students how to build Web sites, so sometimes we pull up the Angus Web sites as examples," Sherfield says.

Event coverage

Besides posting results from Angus shows, the Web Marketing Department covers events important to Angus producers. For three years it has provided coverage of the National Angus Conference and Tour, posting audio files of all speakers, as well as photo highlights of the tours.

"Since the National Angus Conference rotates every year, and goes to different areas, we thought it would be nice to offer that service. Our breeders can logon before the conference to see speaker bios and information about the conference and tour," Denton says. "During the conference they can click in and see the proceedings and photographs, as well as read archived speeches and hear audio recordings of the speeches."

This year, the Web Marketing Department launched a new site, *www.BIFconference.com*, to provide real-time coverage of the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) annual conference. Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc., sponsored the site.

"The focus of this year's BIF conference was on beef cow efficiency, and it is a topic that is really important to all producers," Denton says. "Our National Junior Angus Show was at the same time, and a lot of our breeders were having to choose to go to either one or the other, but some may have been interested in what was going on at both events."

Future opportunities

The popularity of the real-time sites has grown by leaps and bounds over the past three years. Denton says that the 2000 NWSS site had approximately 103,500 hits from users, while the 2002 NWSS site received more than 500,000 hits.

"My goal is to have the number of users to the sites continue to grow and that they will find more benefits to the sites we continue to develop," Denton says.

Denton says that in the future, she hopes they will have the capabilities to add expected progeny differences (EPDs) and pedigrees to animals listed in the class placings.

"It would be nice to have that added service so producers could know the genetics behind the winners," Denton says.

For now, though, the Web Marketing staff is keeping their eyes open for new events on which to provide coverage. Denton says, "It would be nice if we could find a corporate sponsor — someone who wants to partner with us on covering the Cattle Industry Annual Convention next year, and we hope to continue to work with Boehringer Ingelheim on the BIF coverage."