

BY THE NUMBERS

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Longevity Research Project Launched

Some may say it is long overdue, but the American Angus Association and Angus Genetics, Inc. are excited to announce the launch of a cow longevity research project.

After years of promoting and collecting whole-herd data through the MaternalPlus® program, the Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) staff is equipped to move forward with a research initiative in pursuit of a tool to describe cow longevity. While expected progeny difference (EPD) names and genetic models are not official, the new tool will aim to predict how long a cow stays active and productive in the herd.

This concept is not new for the beef cattle industry as several other major beef breeds have long since had tools like cow longevity or stayability included in their suite of genetic evaluation tools.

It was not until 2012, after an initial research project examining the data already in-house was deemed too “noisy” with approaches at that time to get an accurate assessment of cow survivability, that the MaternalPlus whole-herd reporting program was established to create a more robust cow herd database for this particular purpose.

Focus on females

MaternalPlus whole-herd reporting aims to account for every female on an operation each and every year.

A cow is deemed successful when

her weaning weight is reported into the database. If a weaning weight on a calf is not reported for a mature cow, producers must report either a reason as to why a female did not calve or provide a disposal code as to why she left the herd.

In the case of young females, heifer breeding records must be reported or a reason/disposal code assessed to the female. Table 1 lists the possible disposal and reason

codes as to why a cow did not report a calf or left the herd.

Over the next 12-16 months, an assessment of the collected data and genetic modeling will take place to understand the best way to describe cow longevity in Angus cattle. After that, the trait will move into a research EPD format where producers will have the opportunity to evaluate the new tool before it would move into production.

Rebates for enrolling

The American Angus Association is offering a cash-back rebate incentive program for herds enrolled in MaternalPlus®. The Association recognizes good data reporting takes commitment and wants to show the membership its appreciation for ranchers reporting cow and heifer production data.



What's the incentive?

- Introductory 5% cash back on Association fees after a producer completes the first year's re-enrollment.
- 2.5% cash back each subsequent year a re-enrollment is completed until 150,000 females are enrolled in the MaternalPlus program.
- Association fees eligible for the cash-back rebate include: membership, registration, transfer and Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) fees submitted and paid for in the previous 12 months.

How do I get cash back?

Visit your AAA Login account and enroll your herd in MaternalPlus. Once you re-enroll after the first year, you are eligible for your cash-back rebate.

Don't wait too long to enroll. Once the program re-enrolls 150,000 active females, the program's incentive will sunset.

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This research EPD period is an informative trial period where producers can ask questions, make suggestions and report additional data before the EPD would move into the weekly production format.

Research will also be done in how the new tool should be incorporated into the Maternal Weaned Calf Value (\$M) index as cow longevity plays a role in cow-calf profitability. While many component traits of longevity are already included in \$M such as heifer pregnancy, mature cow size, docility, calving ease and foot structure, the inclusion of a direct longevity EPD could change some economic weightings of component traits existing in \$M today.

For producers looking to have data from their cow herd influencing this new EPD in the best way possible, they should start the process of getting enrolled in MaternalPlus. The whole-herd reporting program includes access to additional herd management reports, increasing the accuracy of heifer pregnancy EPDs, and unlocking calving ease direct, birth weight and weaning weight EPDs on unregistered calves.

Table 1: Possible cow disposal codes or reason codes as to why a cow did not report a calf

Disposal Codes	Reason for no calf
Culled - Age	Aborted/Premature
Culled - Calf Died	Calf stillborn, full term
Culled - Eye Problem	Cow moved to next Calving Season
Culled - Feet (Hoof or Toe)	ET Program - Donor Dam
Culled - Fell out of calving season	ET Program - Recipient Cow
Culled - Fertility or Open	Multi-owned, No possession
Culled - Genetic Defect Status	
Culled - High Altitude Disease/PAP Score	
Culled - Illness or Disease	
Culled - Miscellaneous	
Culled - Productivity/Progeny Performance	
Culled - Prolapse Rectal	
Culled - Prolapse Vaginal	
Culled - Structure	
Culled - Teat and Udder	
Culled - Temperament	
Culled - Weather	
Died	
Sold as a commercial	

Do not get left behind. Enroll in MaternalPlus today and be a part of the movement toward a cow longevity tool. To learn more

about the program, visit www.angus.org/maternalplus. 

