



# Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

## Send in breeding records

*When introducing the new Dollar Value (\$Value) Indexes during the informational forum (see page 86) in Louisville, Ky., Sally Dolezal issued a challenge to Angus producers: Send in your breeding data and measures of reproductive performance so the Association can study the potential of a reliable index for reproductive efficiency.*

### Foundation for profitability

In 1979 Bryan Melton, Iowa State University (ISU), did a study to assign levels of economic importance to three categories of traits. He concluded that reproductive traits were twice as important as growth traits and 10 times more important than carcass traits to producer profitability.

The introduction of value-based marketing and branded beef has changed the dynamic. In 1995 Melton concluded that the former 10:5:1 ratio was closer to 2:1:1. Melton's 1995 analysis concluded that cow-calf herds selling calves at weaning time should place 50% of their genetic selection emphasis on reproduction traits, 25% on growth traits and 25% on end-product traits.

If that's the case, why do our current genetic predictions concentrate so heavily on growth and end-product performance?

The simplest answer to that is you do what you can. Growth and carcass traits offer moderate to high heritability, allowing us to make directional change in traits for which we select. They are also fairly easy to measure, which has helped Association members amass 4 million weaning weight records, Dolezal pointed out in Louisville.

That gives us a large database on which to build highly accurate expected progeny differences (EPDs) for growth and carcass traits.

Reproduction traits are another story. With lower heritability, it's more difficult to make directional change from a genetic standpoint, Dolezal said.

In comparison to the 4 million weaning weight records, only 840,000 heifer calving scores have been turned in on Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR). What's really disappointing — producers have submitted only 20,000 cow weights associated with a body condition score (BCS), which is needed for the weight to be of any value. And only 4,000 breeding records have been reported.

The Association is looking at reproductive measures to assess their feasibility as part of a reproductive efficiency index. This involves finding existing databases and looking ahead what information we need to collect. Among the traits being considered are:

- heifer pregnancy rate,
- calving interval,
- percent unassisted births,
- gestation length, and
- breeding data.

Dolezal challenged Association members to send in breeding data, which she called a "five-star" item.

"You have access now to turning in that information," Dolezal said. Data can be submitted online at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org) through AAA Login or through Angus Information Management Software (AIMS). "I challenge you to step up and help us start capturing data to characterize the reproductive efficiency of the Angus cow herd."

### Practical production information

Those who braved the snowstorm to attend the 2003 Range Beef Cow Symposium were treated to a wealth of practical, production-oriented advice. You can attend the symposium from the comfort of your office by visiting [www.rangebeefcow.com](http://www.rangebeefcow.com). This Web site features real-time coverage of the event provided by Angus Productions Inc. (API), publisher of the *Angus Journal* and the *Angus Beef Bulletin*. Click the News:Papers:Audio link to access links to summaries, audios, proceedings papers and PowerPoint® presentations of the speakers.

### Hot issues

Industry leaders will tussle with several hot issues as five industry organizations meet in Phoenix, Ariz., Jan. 28-31, for the 2004 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show. Log on to [www.4cattlemen.com](http://www.4cattlemen.com) for API's real-time coverage of the event. Visit the site now to view the schedule.

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