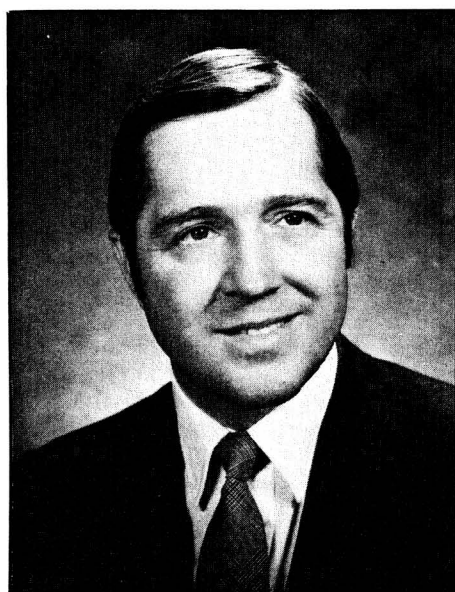# from the office

LEAD IN

by Dick Spader
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By the year 2000 and beyond I'm sure we'll all look back to the '70s and '80s as a period of time in the Angus business when significant changes were made in our industry. To begin with, I'm sure we'll look to the widespread use of A.I. and the liberalization of A.I. rules by the American Angus Assn. for the overall improvement of the breed. Today, more than ever before, the best genetics in the world are available to all breeders, large or small, through the use of A.I. and the long range benefit is noticed, not only in the improvement of the nation's registered herds, but more importantly in the quality of seedstock offered the commercial industry.

Along with A.I., breeders have improved their management to capitalize on an A.I. program; and technology in the area of heat synchronization has helped cattlemen minimize labor and time invested for successful A.I. work. Angus association records alone indicate that breeders have utilized A.I. since today over 20% of the cattle registered are the product of A.I., compared to about 10% in the '60s when open A.I. was not available. The '70s and '80s also were the period for the greatest acceptance of performance records.

Over that period of time more than **one million** weaning and yearling records were processed through AHIR and last year alone more records were processed than the entire period from 1960 to 1970. In 1980 a total of 114,853 weaning weights and 48,916 yearling weights were entered in the AHIR program and the 1981 year will easily break that record by an additional 10% or more.

Breeders involved in keeping objective data through AHIR have increased 10-20% each year and statistics indicate that more than 50% of the calves registered last year also had performance information on AHIR.

This brings me to the most important program available to the industry in the '80s and that is Sire Evaluation, officially started in 1973 and now in its eighth year with the 1981 report in this issue of the ANGUS JOURNAL.

The first Sire Evaluation program was structured with bulls mated in commercial herds using reference sires to compare differences in performance of progeny. This program is still available today but it is also supplemented with field data sire evaluation made possible by two important factors—first the widespread use of A.I. and second, the continued involvement of Angus breeders in keeping records of performance through the Angus Herd Improvement Records program. AHIR performance information serves as the base for field data sire evaluation and sires used A.I. have offered the tie for comparing bulls across the industry. To date, over 1.7 million units of measure at birth, weaning and yearling contribute to the storehouse of information that is analyzed for the Sire Evaluation Report. This performance information is tied to animals within the breed by registration numbers that are not duplicated in the breed. For example, some of the more popular sires in the breed have been used in hundreds of herds and have as many as 5,000 head of progeny evaluated through weaning and more than 4,000 through yearling. The progeny of these sires are compared to thousands of progeny of other sires and Sire Evaluation becomes a reality.

The widespread use of A.I. and increased involvement in AHIR have offered the opportunity in 1980 and 1981 to start evaluating bulls through the use of field data in the AHIR program. The 1981 report in this issue lists a total of 673 bulls that have been tested, either through the association's stuctured Sire Evaluation program or have an adequate number of progeny evaluated through AHIR to qualify. The combination of the data for these reports is discussed in the Sire Evaluation section of this issue.

Most important, the Sire Evaluation report lists bulls for their **Expected Progeny Difference** for birth weight, weaning weight and yearling weight. The EPD is an accurate estimate of how progeny of a given bull will perform for each trait listed. Bear in mind that the range for birth weight is − 4.9 lb. to + 8.0 lb., the range for weaning weight is − 19.0 lb. to + 32.2 lb. and the range for yearling weight is − 46.7 lb. to + 77.1 lb. Using yearling weight alone, the difference between the high and low bull for EPD is a total of 123.8 lb! In addition, all bulls have a maternal breeding value listed from the Angus Performance Pedigree. This value is an estimate of milk production, as evaluated from weaning weights. The report also includes carcass data for any bulls that have been evaluated through the structured Sire Evaluation program where progeny have been taken through the slaughter phase.

Sire Evaluation, while in its infancy, is one of the most exciting and meaningful programs in our business today. Never before have all breeders had the opportunity to share the unbiased information reported through this program and then had the opportunity to either use these sires A.I. or purchase sons or daughters for herd improvement.　　　　A