

# AIMS Tech Notes

by Scott Johnson, director of Angus Information Management Software



## When one computer just isn't enough

Finally, a success story about backups! A member called recently about a problem restoring a backup. His computer had crashed, but he had a backup on a disk. His problem was that AIMS couldn't find it. He just needed to use File, Restore instead of trying to import the file. The good thing is that he had a backup, and it saved him.

The moral of the story (as always) ... make backups.

### Meet me in Louisville

I'll be in Louisville, Ky., for the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) and the Association Annual Meeting. Two sessions at the conference are scheduled for you to learn about AIMS and Crystal Report Writer.

On Sunday, Nov. 12, I'll have a beginners' AIMS workshop from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Executive West Hotel (look for the signs). We're doing this between the candidates' forum and the evening reception, but that will be enough time to show you the basics of AIMS on a live computer screen.

Please note this session is geared toward beginners and those interested in purchasing AIMS. Experienced users may get bored, but they also might learn some new tips. I also will be reviewing some of the changes, fixes and enhancements in version 2.0d.

(Note: 2.0d is a maintenance release that will be sent to all current AIMS users free of charge. I'm not sure of the release date but hope it will be before you read this.)

A second session will be on Monday, Nov. 13, from 9 to 11 a.m. It will be tailored for AIMS users who would like to learn more about Crystal Report Writer. The workshop will be in a conference room near the Annual Meeting location in the exposition hall. Look for the signs.

Speaking of backups, we often get questions about using AIMS on two computers. Installing the program on two computers is easy, and as long as the same member owns both computers, it's legal. The trick is getting the data on both, and managing the transfer back and forth between them.

**There are two** basic work-flow scenarios that need to be discussed here: (1) There is a primary computer where *all* the work is done (by *work* I mean data entry, imports and exports), and a secondary computer is used only to view the data and to print reports; or (2) data can be entered on either computer, and they both can be used for importing or exporting data.

Note: This discussion doesn't address networks. Networks can solve the problems I'm about to describe, but they require more know-how to set up, plus they require a special version of AIMS from our office.

The first scenario is the easiest to handle. Let's say *Alpha* is your main computer where nearly everything is done. To get the data to *Beta*, you simply need to use File, Backup and create a backup file. Be sure to note where the file will be saved, or you can change the location to a floppy-disk drive. I recommend using something other than the computer-generated filename and giving it a name that means something to you. I usually call it *transfer* so I know it's the file I need to move to the other computer.

Once the backup is done, you put it on a disk, take it to the other computer (*Beta*), then do File, Restore and point the file selection to the floppy drive. Select the backup file, then click Save and wait for AIMS to finish.

Here's where you have to be careful. Remember, in this first scenario, you don't make any changes to the data on *Beta*. You can, but that alters the scenario.

**The second scenario** is more complicated because you have to keep track of the "live" data. What do I mean by *live data*?

Let's say you enter new calves on *Alpha*,

then make a backup and restore it on *Beta*. Then you enter weaning weights on *Beta*. That makes *Beta's* data the live data because it's more current than what's on *Alpha*.

Then, without making a backup from *Beta* to *Alpha*, you start entering medical records on *Alpha*. Now you have a problem because you have changed data on both computers without making any backups. If you change anything on either or both computers without backups, you cannot resynchronize them.

To avoid this problem, always keep track of the live data. It can be in only one place at a time. I've seen people put a sticky note that says "Live Data" on the appropriate computer. If it helps, use the word *active* for *live*.

The point is that you never change data you intend to save on the "non-live" computer. It's OK to print reports from it (similar to the first scenario), but don't try to change the data.

**If you need** to get the live data from *Beta* to *Alpha*, reverse the process of backups. Make a backup on *Beta* and restore on *Alpha*; move the sticky note to *Alpha*; and don't change any data on *Beta*.

Caution: Once you've restored a backup, check for some key data that will verify the restoration worked and that you used the right file. You wouldn't want to proceed with new changes and later realize you had used the wrong backup file.

In summary, the data can be "live" on only one computer at a time. Pretend the non-live computer doesn't even have AIMS on it, let alone any data. To move the live data from one computer to another, simply do File, Backup on the first computer, then File, Restore on the second computer. And don't forget to move the sticky note!

e-mail: scottj@angus.org