

by Mark McCully
CEO, American Angus Association



Conversations

There are a lot of good days in this role, but the best days are the days I am in the country, visiting with breeders and looking at Angus cows. I have had several of those “best days” recently, attending Angus field days and state tours.

I always learn a lot and my perspective continues to grow as I hear the different views and philosophies that exist across our diverse membership. Regardless of the part of country I’m in, I find myself in some similar conversations.

Of course, being in agriculture, most conversations start with the weather. That quickly moves to cost inflation and difficulty finding help. There aren’t easy answers to these issues, but the concerns are understandable and widespread.

Specific to the Angus business, I commonly have breeders seek me out to brag on our customer service team at Angus. I agree that we have the best team in the business. In a society where great service seems a rarity, I am very proud of the team we have that works so hard to help our members be successful.

Genomics are definitely a common topic of discussion. The confidence Angus breeders have in genomic technology seems to range from extremely high to very skeptical. One undeniable advantage is the improved accuracy of parentage in our pedigrees enabled by genomic testing. From multi-bull pastures to mixed up records around artificial insemination (AI) service sires, and even cows swapping calves, genomic parentage testing has allowed for more accurate pedigrees than ever before.

Many have recognized less phenotypic data being reported in sale books and have questions about genomics overtaking the phenotypic data. We have worked to convey information around this topic in many *Angus Journal* articles, Angus University resources and one-on-one interactions with breeders; but I know the questions still exist.


Many times, the concern may start with a statement of, “Nobody is turning in data anymore.”

I am excited to answer that concern with news. Angus breeders turned in 773,692 weights this year, equal to last year. Data submission of heifer breeding records and foot scores are up 14% and 35%, respectively. Despite the ability to fill in expected progeny differences (EPDs) with genomics alone, I am impressed and encouraged that Angus breeders know the genetic evaluation relies on weights and measures and continue to submit this data. Many have even elevated their commitment to data recording by enrolling in Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) Inventory Reporting.

Several discussions in the boardroom and in the pasture have centered around how breeders can get the credit they deserve for being dedicated data submitters. The addition of the MaternalPlus® logo and phenotypic data denotation

to the online pedigree has been a start, and I’m excited to see breeders pointing that out in their promotions. We continue to look for ways to highlight breeders dedicated to data collection, so please share any ideas you have with me or members of the Board.

The new *Angus Journal* podcast, *The Angus Conversation*, has been a great tool for us to dig deeper into many of these topics with board members, breeders and staff. If you enjoy podcasts, I hope you will tune in. I am excited this new media offering gives us yet another opportunity to connect with Angus breeders, have dialogue and debate, and find solutions to today’s challenges that will keep the Angus breed and our breeders in the driver’s seat for generations to come.

By engaging and discussing opportunities for our breed, we’ll be able to make improvements and continue to lead the industry in the future. 

Mark A. McCully

mmccully@angus.org

JOIN THE CONVERSATION.

