

Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president



Year-end figures reveal breed strength, opportunities

The American Angus Association's fiscal year ended Sept. 30. For the 13th consecutive year we recorded increases in nearly every area of activity. It has been a good year for the Association and, more importantly, for Association members.

Demand for Angus cattle has increased in recent years. This is reflected in the average prices paid for registered Angus seedstock at 619 auctions reported to the Association during the fiscal year. This is the largest number of auction sales reported in the last 30 years. Just 10 years ago the total number of auction sales reported was 360.

During the fiscal year, prices paid for bulls averaged \$2,051, and prices paid for females averaged \$1,949.

Registrations in 1999 totaled 260,907, an increase of more than 3% from last year and an increase of more than 100,000 head from 1989. There has been a steady increase in registrations since 1986. Transfers for the year were equal to a year ago at 151,390 and represent 50,000 more Angus cattle than were transferred at the beginning of the decade.

What's more, membership statistics show there are an increasing number of new Angus herds being started. For the 12-month period, 2,711 new regular memberships were issued, up 1.8%, and junior memberships were up 9.94% at 1,704.

■ Brand growth

Demand for Angus cattle has been improved by growth in the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program. Sales of *Certified Angus Beef*™ product during the year set

another record, totaling 492 million pounds (lb.). This represents a 19.7% increase over 1998. A total of 278 million lb. was sold at retail, 140 million lb. through foodservice and 68 million lb. internationally. An additional 6 million lb. was marketed in a miscellaneous category.

The CAB Program's figures represent 9.5 million head of live cattle identified for the Program for an increase of 6.7%. Of those, 20.3% met CAB Program specifications for an increase from 1998.

■ Challenge to improve

To sustain growth like this, we will need to increase the number of predominantly black, Angus-sired feeder cattle going to market. That will take continued sales pressure on the part of all of us to get more Angus bulls in commercial herds.

We also need to breed even better cattle if we are to further increase our share of the bull market. Fortunately the fiscal-year figures show that Angus breeders are working hard to do this. For the first time ever, Angus breeders recorded and processed nearly 650,000 birth, weaning and yearling weights in the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program. The total for the year was 642,160 — an increase of 6.6%.

But easy-calving, efficient cattle aren't enough. We will need more cattle with the bred-in ability to marble and to produce a high-yielding, USDA average-Choice or better carcass in order to continue to expand the CAB Program.

I am happy to report that of the more than 5,800 bulls appearing in the Fall 1999 Angus *Sire Evaluation Report*, 71% expressed

carcass data either from National Cattle Evaluation (NCE) or from pedigree analysis. In addition, 434 new sires were added to the carcass data report in fiscal 1999, bringing the total to 2,379 sires. It is interesting to note that 172 of the 189 sires recording more than 100 calves in fiscal 1999 have carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs) in the *Sire Evaluation Report*.

Many of these bulls with positive carcass and growth traits are being sought by commercial cattle producers. These business people have learned the value of producing steers and heifers that grade USDA Choice or higher. In some cases they learned their lesson by seeing many of their steers and heifers, which were fed out under retained ownership, fail to earn an additional \$50 or more per head because the carcasses failed to grade USDA Choice.

Each of some 25 Angus bulls had 1,000 or more offspring conceived via artificial insemination (AI) registered with the Association during the 1999 fiscal year. Of the top 25 bulls, all have EPDs for carcass merit. These 25 bulls produced 52,469 offspring registered during the 1999 fiscal year.

■ Selling point

It is a powerful selling point for Angus. To take advantage of this point, the 1999 fiscal-year advertising campaign addresses the importance of Angus cattle's meeting high grade-and-yield standards while continuing to produce beef efficiently from conception to consumer. Start looking for the new Angus advertisements, which feature an offer for a free copy of the Angus *Sire Evaluation Report*, in beef industry publications this fall.

It is pleasant indeed to top off 1999 with the kind of statistical information I am able to report here. We have made solid progress during the past year. Many challenges remain for us, but as a breed we can deal with them from a base of strength.

Richard J. Spader

YEAR TO DATE	1999	1998	INCREASE OR DECREASE	INCREASE OR DECREASE (%)
Registrations	260,907	252,969	7,938	3.14
ET Registrations	18,456	15,078	3,378	22.40
Transfers	151,390	151,721	(331)	(0.22)
Regular Members	2,470	2,433	—	—
Convert to Regular Members	241	230	—	—
Total Regular	2,711	2,663	48	1.80
Junior Members	1,704	1,550	154	9.94
Non-Resident Members	7	2	—	—
AI Certificates	102,565	96,643	5,922	6.13