



ANGIE STUMP DENTON PHOTOS

Approximately 300 Angus breeders from 26 states attended the 1999 National Angus Conference in Amarillo, Texas.

National Conference

Focuses on **ANGUS VALUE**

BY SHELIA STANNARD

Angus producers from 26 states and two foreign countries gathered information from more than a dozen speakers at the 1999 National Angus Conference. The speakers addressed ways to continue increasing value in the Angus business throughout the various segments of the beef industry during the annual event, Sept. 10-11, in Amarillo, Texas.

“The Angus breed stands poised at the dawn of a new millennium to make significant contributions to consumers and the profitability of the beef industry,” said keynote speaker Tom Field, associate professor of beef cattle management systems at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. “However, to maximize that value will require a renewed commitment to excellence and quality.”

Field indicated several trends cattle producers will want to contemplate to remain strong in the industry. First, he said, competition in the meat case will intensify due to an increased number of value-added and branded products.



American Angus Association President Bill Borror welcomed attendees at the 1999 National Angus Conference in Amarillo. Each year the American Angus Association hosts a national conference in a different region of the United States.

“Staying close to the customer will not be an option, but rather a prerequisite,” Field said. The selection criteria for seedstock producers will be dictated by cost efficiencies and diverse consumer demands of the commercial cow-calf enterprise and other industry alliances.

Next, he emphasized the importance of



keeping records. Those with information will have opportunities to share in value-added returns, he said, while those without will have to try to survive in an increasingly limited commodity market.

“The AHIR (Angus Herd Improvement Records) database is the single most valuable strategic resource at your disposal,” Field told nearly 300 Angus seedstock and commercial producers. “Grow it. Protect it. Use it. It will be worth more in the future.”

Finally, he challenged the beef industry to find ways to engage a new generation of people who have the right stuff to assure a successful future.

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American Angus Association Regional Manager Matt Perrier emceed the conference on Saturday.

■ **Stand behind a quality product**

Bill Mies, professor of animal science at Texas A&M University, College Station, encouraged attendees to continue to improve product quality in order to maintain demand for beef. As beef quality continues to rise, so will its demand.

“Quality is getting what you expected to get for the price you paid for a product,” Mies said. “As we move down the road, black hair will not be sufficient enough to ensure quality.”

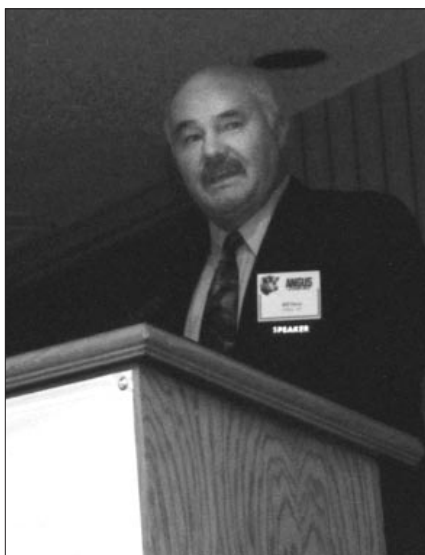
Mies encouraged Angus producers, packers and retailers to work together to ensure the customer is getting a quality product. Source verification of a product is one way, he said, to make consumers feel more satisfied with the products they are buying. However, more people need to collect more data to better verify the source of a product.

“There is a significant niche in the market of people who will pay more for a product if someone stands behind it,” he said. “They want to know that someone stands behind the product and that there is information available about the product they are buying.”

■ **Black ≠ Angus**

Source verification goes beyond selling black-hided cattle. Bill Bowman, director of commercial relations, said identity is a problem the beef industry contends with on a daily basis.

“We, as producers, need to change our mind-set from black-hided to Angus,”



“Once we know where we are genetically, we must address the most important EPD of all — Mother Nature’s EPD or the ‘Environment Probably Dictates.’ We need to look at our environment and our customers’ environments when making genetic decisions,” said Bill Davis, Montana Angus breeder and conference speaker.



Minnie Lou Bradley, American Angus Association Board member from Texas, welcomed Angus breeders to the Lone Star State and to the heart of cattle country. She reminded producers the Texas Panhandle produces 30% of the nation’s fed beef and is the hub of the beef-processing industry.

SHELIA STANNARD PHOTO



“We’re not in the cattle business; we are in the food-production business,” said John Crouch, American Angus Association director of performance programs. Crouch explained the basics of carcass EPDs and reported on the status and current success of the American Angus Association Centralized Ultrasound Processing (AAACUP) Laboratory.

Bowman urged. “Black hide is not what makes consistent, high-quality beef. It’s the predictable Angus genetics that contribute to this uniformity.”

Bowman said producers need to change their philosophy from “grow it and the consumer will buy it” to “production with the consumer in mind.” Commercial cattle producers will gain the competitive edge in producing a high-quality product when using registered Angus bulls with predictable genetics.

Producing what the consumer wants will be vital for Angus producers to survive in the next millennium.

“Trying to create a market for what we have to sell is much more difficult than trying to produce what the market wants to buy,” said Jan Lyons, a seedstock producer from Manhattan, Kan. “Listen to what your customers need and want, and then design your breeding program with that in mind.” It will make breeding and marketing decisions easier, she added.



Keynote speaker Tom Field, Colorado State University, addressed the national conference. He discussed trends cattle producers should consider while moving into the new millennium. "Staying close to the customer will not be an option, but rather a prerequisite," he said.

■ **Coordinated effort**

Cal Siegfried addressed the issue of increasing profit in the feedlot. Siegfried, who is a co-founder of Heartland Cattle Co., McCook, Neb., said profitability in the feedyard means a more coordinated effort between all segments of the industry, which begins with success on the ranch.

The first step is to build consistency within each cow herd. Consistency means cows within a herd are similar, but not that every cow has to be like everybody else's.

"Your opportunities are endless," said Siegfried. "Use the data that's available to you to improve consistency in your herd."

He encouraged producers to use a balanced management approach based on individual goals and environmental considerations when making management and genetic decisions.

He pointed out that many producers spend hours considering sire-selection data for a bull that will be used three or four years, but yet many don't spend that much time considering the genetics of replacement females that will remain in a cow herd for eight or nine years.

To obtain a copy of the *1999 National Angus Conference Proceedings*, contact the Association at (816) 383-5100.

"The five steps to add value for the cow-calf producer are:

- 1. Make them black;**
- 2. Wean gently at the ranch;**
- 3. Build real immunity;**
- 4. Build reasonable feedlot performance; and**
- 5. Build desirable carcass quality."**

— *Virgil Huseman*

"Alliance concepts will be the only way we are going to be able to maintain our independence in the beef industry."

— *Cal Siegfried*

"Angus cattle are truly one of the few shining stars in the beef industry."

— *Larry Corah*



Bill Mies told producers that consumers would pay for a product if someone stands behind it. He also said the consumer is willing to pay more for source-verified cattle, based on a study that tracked beef cuts from 600 cattle through a San Antonio grocery store.

