

# AIMS Tech Notes

by Scott Johnson, director of Angus Information Management Software

## Electronic files improve turnaround, accuracy

Some interesting statistics showed up in the Association's year-end reports: 18.9% of registrations, 28.4% of weaning weights and 33.9% of yearling weights were submitted electronically. Those are great numbers, considering that only three or four years ago, they were around 3%-5%.

I should mention that not all of the data that comes in electronically comes via AIMS. We don't discourage anyone from using whatever program they want, as long as they can conform to the data structure our Information Systems Department requires.

Benefits of submitting your data electronically include:

(A) It reduces the number of times human error can be introduced. Electronically submitted files are loaded directly into the computer at the Association. They still have to pass the normal checks, but there isn't a person at our end typing in the data, introducing the possibility of error. (Our data-entry personnel are *very* good; but they're human.)

(B) It speeds up the process, and you avoid the need to use the postal service. The Association prides itself on getting registrations out the next day, but that starts when the mail gets here. If you send a registration file electronically today, the certificates go out tomorrow.

Please remember that we're making at least two assumptions: (1) you sent the file, and we received it in time to submit it before 2 p.m.; and (2) all aspects of the application passed. Please don't use electronic filing as an excuse to procrastinate. Things still can happen that

cause delays. For example, the Internet is not so perfect that every file makes it on the first try. And if you never have sent files, there is a learning curve.

(C) You can get the data back electronically. In the case of registrations, the return file updates new registration numbers and the progeny count of the dams. But it's even handier for weights because it updates the adjusted values and ratios, as well as EPDs. That adds up to a lot of data you won't have to enter in the computer, which then becomes available for a variety of summary reports that are time-consuming to generate by hand.

**Let me briefly describe** the whole process of sending and receiving files electronically.

(1) Enter the data. The whole process hinges on the data's being entered before proceeding.

(2) Proof the data. There are reports available for each type of data set (registrations, weaning weights, yearling weights) that will help you ensure the data is in place and is accurate. If nothing else, use the "All" view of the respective tab to look for missing data.

It's also important for registrations to be sure the "Yes" option is checked, indicating that, yes, you want it registered and that the animal should be included in the export file. The registration-export process also will check for other missing data, but only if "Yes" is marked.

(3) Export the data. Open the pen you want to send, then go to File, Data, Export; change the operation to the appropriate option, then click on the Export button. You should note where the file is being stored and the exact filename. Pay special attention to the three-digit extension. You need to know both of these facts so you can find the file location and the actual file. Other files could be there still, so pay attention to the first letter and to the extension.

**Note:** You must have the relevant animals in a pen. In other words, if you are registering calves, they must be in a pen separate from the cows. You can't export a pen of cows to register their calves — you

would be attempting to reregister the cows.

(4) Send the file to us. There are actually three ways to electronically send the file, but the most popular is e-mail. Get into your e-mail program, start a new message addressed to aims@angus.org, then attach the file.

You know the filename and location from Step 3. Each e-mail program has its own way of attaching files, but they typically have an icon, such as a paper clip. If you don't know how to use your e-mail program, work with your Internet service provider (ISP) to learn the proper steps. If you e-mail the file, we will return a message that we received it and let you know if it appears to be OK.

Other methods of electronically sending the file are to copy it onto a floppy disk and mail the disk or to use HyperTerminal to send the file by modem directly to a computer we have ready for receiving files. (See the AIMS Help file for more information on all of these methods.)

(5) Get the return file. Once the Association is done processing the file, we send you an update file. In the case of registrations, it will be a "D" file that, when imported, will update the new registration numbers, EPDs and progeny information for the dams. In fact, the file actually is an EPD update file. You use the EPD import operation, which also updates the registration numbers.

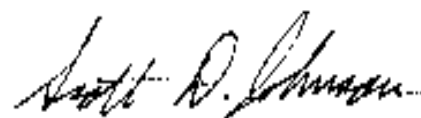
Weights files generate a performance update, or a "P" file, which updates the adjusted values and EPDs. In either case, you first will need to know where the file is on your computer. Some e-mail programs embed the file in the message. In that case you need to save the file to a new location with the Save As command. (Again, please work with your ISP if necessary.)

Note where the file is saved, then get into AIMS. Go to File, Data, Import and change the operation accordingly; then browse to the location noted previously and click on the Import button. You also can preview the information before importing it to verify the data.

(6) A couple of days later, you will receive the relevant paperwork.

Those of you doing this for the first time may feel overwhelmed. If you have done it already, I think you'll agree it's simple. The AIMS Help file also includes discussion with more details where possible, so please read that when in doubt.

If that doesn't work, give us a call.



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### Denver

I will be staffing the Angus booth outside the Angus showing at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo., Jan. 10, 11 and 12. Stop by the booth to ask any AIMS questions or to discuss new ideas.