

2001 National Angus Conference focuses on

Leading the Angus Advance

by *Shelia Stannard*

More than 400 Angus enthusiasts and cattle producers from 28 states and Canada met Oct. 1-3 in North Platte, Neb., for the 2001 National Angus Conference and Tour. The annual conference, "Leading the Angus Advance," featured some of the beef industry's top speakers, and followed the two-day tour of Angus herds in the Nebraska Sandhills.

Keynote speaker William Mies, formerly of Texas A&M University and currently with Future Beef Operations LLC, addressed the group about the changes that have occurred in the beef industry and the changes that will continue in order to be more efficient in producing meat for the consumer.

"You are very fortunate in this breed in that you sit on the one tool that no one else has that would allow you to respond to these changes, and that's the database," Mies said about the Angus breed changing with the industry.

Mies discussed the evolution of carcass beef to boxed beef, adding that another change is yet to occur — case-ready product provided to retailers.

"Case-ready is the ultimate in what we're going to do to provide meat into the retail chain," Mies said.

Case-ready product shipped from the packer to the retailer will allow more meat to be shipped with less waste. It also decreases liability for retailers involved in food safety accidents due to microbiological contamination, as the retailer will no longer be cutting and packaging the meat.

"To lead the Angus advance, you are going to have to rely on the database you have built," Mies told cattlemen. "Identify those genetic lines that give you the combination of marbling and ... adequate muscling."

The foundation

Bill Beal, professor of animal and poultry science at Virginia Tech, discussed the foundation of producing the end product — the reproduction cycle — using props and audience participation to explain the estrous cycle.

"If you understand the estrous cycle of a cow, you essentially know everything that is essential to reproduction of a cow," Beal said.

Using a simple demonstration and props, such as a balloon for the follicle and a ball for the egg, Beal demonstrated how simple the estrous cycle is to understand, and how important it is for successful breeding.



► Bill Beal, Virginia Tech, left, demonstrates a cow's estrous cycle at the 2001 National Angus Conference Oct. 3 in North Platte, Neb. Using audience volunteers, he showed how a follicle (the balloon) is formed toward the end of an estrous cycle if the cow has not become pregnant. He showed by popping the balloon that when the cow comes into heat, the follicle secretes estrogen and the corpus luteum (CL) regresses.

Information flow

In an effort to meet the needs of commercial cattle producers, the American Angus Association formed the Commercial Relations Department three years ago. Bill Bowman, director of commercial relations, described the programs that are in place to assist commercial producers, including the Angus Resource Clearinghouse Network (ARCNet), the Bull Listing Service and the Angus Beef Record Service (BRS). He stressed that the flow of information between seedstock and commercial cattle producers and through the marketing system is crucial.

Source verification will be important as branded beef programs such as Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), continue to grow, Bowman added. Source verification begins with the producer who identifies each individual animal. Today, only one-third of the ranches and one-third of the feedlots have individual identification systems in place.

"We have to be willing to look to the future and be ready to make changes that are needed," Bowman said about identification practices.

James Henderson, general manager for B3R Country Meats in Childress, Texas, presented material about information flow and its importance in the beef industry. Henderson said a top priority for their company is to gather data to share with their customers.

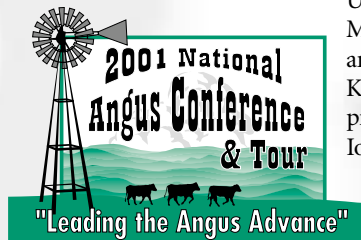
"The most important thing about gathering information is discipline," Henderson told the group. "There are many methods of gathering information, but the discipline to gather that information is the thing that you've got to get utmost in your mind."

Other speakers on the program included Twig Marston, associate professor and Extension beef specialist, Kansas State University (K-State); Dan Moser, assistant professor of animal sciences and industry, K-State; Doyle Wilson, professor of animal science, Iowa State University; Tim Schiefelbein, value-based procurement manager, ConAgra Foods Inc.; and John Landry, *Certified*

Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand and center-of-the-plate specialist, Sysco Food Service. Audio recordings of the conference speakers, along with photographs and copies of their speeches are also available online at www.angusjournal.com/nationalconference.

Attendees spent the two days preceding the conference on a tour across the Nebraska Sandhills. During the two days, they visited a commercial feedlot, registered and commercial Angus herds and the historic Haythorn Land & Cattle Co.

The three-day event was made possible, in part, through a partnership with Intervet Inc. "Intervet is proud to team-up with the American Angus Association on this educational and enjoyable event in the heart



► James Henderson, Childress, Texas, addressed more than 400 attendees of the 2001 National Angus Conference Oct. 3 in North Platte, Neb. He said gathering data to share with consumers is the No. 1 priority for B3R Country Meats Inc., where he is general manager. Information flow is the key to success as the Angus breed continues to advance toward a consumer focus.

of cattle county — the Sandhills of Nebraska," says Jeff Baxter, marketing manager for Intervet Inc., which is headquartered in Millsboro, Del.

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► Promotion is an important part of generating interest in the National Angus Conference. Shelia Stannard, assistant director of communications and public relations for the American Angus Association, was interviewed by KNOP-TV of North Platte about events at this year's conference.



► Angus enthusiasts who couldn't attend the National Angus Conference could listen to a live Web broadcast of the event at www.angusjournal.com/nationalconference sponsored by Sydenstricker Genetics and R&R Cattle Co. The speeches are also archived on the National Angus Conference Web site. Trent Loos, Norris, S.D., assisted with the broadcast.