



Up Front

► by **John Crouch**, executive vice president

Ensuring the success of Angus

During my tenure with the American Angus Association I have been involved in five long-range planning sessions involving our officers, directors and the staffs of the American Angus Association, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) and Angus Productions Inc. (API). Since the first one in the mid-1980s, many different aspects of the beef industry have been discussed. These sessions give us time to brainstorm and to discuss and plan the Association's future. A wide range of topics has been considered, from management issues to deep philosophical matters concerning the future role of breed associations in a dynamic, ever-changing industry.

A clear theme

Interestingly enough, the thrust of our most recent session centered on the core issues of basic beef production and the factors that have enabled the Angus breed to be successful.

One indisputable factor is crystal clear: Information, technology and consolidation will rule the industry.

For the past quarter century the American Angus Association has amassed reams of data on beef cattle performance and has translated this data into some 17 traits that affect profitable beef production. These genetic traits have served the industry well — up to this point. However, to arrive at the next level of service, this data must be

incorporated into economic indexes that can be specifically applied to each operation. Software programs that can utilize operation-specific inputs and outputs will be invaluable in assisting producers to determine profitable production levels.

Technology and information are so entwined it is sometimes difficult to separate them. Computer technology has made it possible to access and process information instantly. For example, approximately 50% of Association business is transacted electronically, either through Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) or the Member Logon section of the Association's Web site (www.angus.org). And

this phenomenon is increasing in popularity on a daily basis.

Technology also provides your Association the opportunity to supply the commercial industry with access to programs such as Beef Record Service (BRS) and AngusSource. This capability provides a venue to offer the commercial industry a wide array of educational and recordkeeping software. To paraphrase a statement often made, "Data turned into applicable information equals power."

Changing times

Industry consolidation and cooperation are also prevailing issues that are talked about each time a group discussion occurs. We have observed consolidation efforts in almost every phase of the industry for the past three decades. Some think consolidation is an exciting expression of progress, while others profess it is the downfall of the family farm. In truth, it is probably somewhere in between.

There is a general trend in business for corporations to merge for efficiencies of scale and, by the same token, for farming and ranching operations to become larger and more diversified. It has also been suggested that breed associations consider

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AMERICAN ANGUS AUXILIARY

President—Nancy Jo Sullivan, Marietta, OH
For a complete listing of officers, refer to page 48.

REGIONAL MANAGERS—Refer to page 27.

CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC

President—Jim Riemann, Wooster, Ohio
For a CAB staff listing, refer to page 135.

combining their efforts in order to capitalize on these same efficiencies. For several reasons, one of which is a loss of autonomy, breed associations have been reluctant to consider this possibility.

Perhaps your Association has taken, through the BRS program, the first step to offer a one-stop information system to the commercial sector of the beef industry.

One thing is for sure: The demand for increased technology, more and better information, and improved efficiencies is not

going to diminish over time. With these things in mind, the Board of Directors established five key strategies that we will focus on during the next three to five years. Those strategies include:

- ▶ Achieve Angus excellence through information;
- ▶ Increase beef demand with Angus equity;
- ▶ Identify and implement relevant technologies;
- ▶ Optimize resources; and

▶ Create opportunities.

We came away with these strategies, anticipating the future. We will work hard to focus on these strategies to ensure the success of the Angus breed and the American Angus Association.

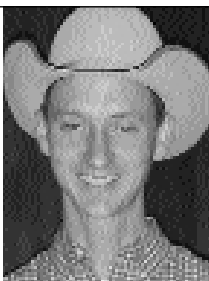
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▶ Who to contact for help with marketing Angus cattle or for information about Association programs


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