

# Return on Investment

Five years ago, Texas Angus Association members helped start the Beef Development Center of Texas. They are now reaping the rewards.

by *Stephanie Veldman*

**T**he Beef Development and Research Center of Texas was started in 1998 through the vision of several forward-thinking producers who were looking for alternative sources to test and market their genetics. Since that time the center, now called the Beef Development Center of Texas (BDCT), has gain-tested approximately 1,200 bulls per year.

The BDCT ranks within the top three largest test stations in the United States. More than 5,800 bulls have gone through the test since 1998.

Several members of the Texas Angus Association (TAA) and the Texas Brangus Breeders Association (TBBA) made the initial investment to begin the BDCT, with Texas A&M University providing data collection and interpretation. The associations teamed with the Tom J. Moore Cattle Co. and established the center on the Tom J. Moore Feed Yard near Washington Texas. To fund the project, 18 members of the TAA invested \$20,000 out of their own pockets.

"The Texas Angus Association did not invest one penny in the beginning," says Bill Stone, president of TAA and an Angus breeder from Bells. "This was done by several of the Texas Angus members."

Craig Hillert, manager of the BDCT, says members of the TAA and TBBA volunteered their time to sit on the board of directors for the BDCT. Robert Bruner, an Angus member from Huntsville, Texas, was the president.

## Payment received

A few years after the research center was formed, the TBBA and American International Charolais Association (AICA), which had joined after the BDCT started, decided to pull out. The TBBA pulled out after three years due to their lack of numbers being tested.

Last winter, after five years in operation, representatives from the TAA decided to sell the TAA interest in the BDCT to the Tom J. Moore Cattle Co. because the BDCT was at a point where it was financially stable.

"We felt like it was a good time for us to do that, and all of the investors who invested money in the beginning were paid back by the beef development center," Stone says. In January 2002, the TAA received a check from the BDCT for \$68,000 at the TAA annual meeting.

"In selling it, we made the deal that they would still benefit from Angus bulls that were tested. We give them money on each bull that goes through our program," Hillert says.

"Last year they got \$25 a head on every Angus bull that went through the public test, and then they got \$15 a head on bulls that went through a custom test," Hillert says. More than \$7,000 was returned for bulls tested in 2002, and the TAA will continue to receive money for bulls tested at the BDCT.

"It is a relationship where we help each other. We give the TAA contributions for bulls tested at our facility, and, in return, they allow us to advertise in the *Texas Angus News* and help promote us by telling their members what we have to offer," he adds.

## Increased opportunities

Stone says the TAA has plans for the money received from the BDCT that will benefit Texas Angus breeders.

"The mission of the Texas Angus Association is to support and enhance the services of the American Angus Association for those in the Texas region who have interest in Angus cattle," Stone says. "This will be accomplished by providing beneficial and valued services such as education, marketing opportunities and communication for its members as well as for others in the region who utilize Angus genetics."

He adds that some of the money has gone toward conducting educational programs, including increasing services provided on the TAA Web site. "It gives us an opportunity to do some things for the Texas Angus members

that we have never been financially able to do before," he says.

"We will be doing programs trying to educate people on EPDs (expected progeny differences), on carcass traits, and encouraging people to test their bulls and to do AHIR (Angus Herd Improvement Records)," Stone says. "We are trying to do as much as we can on a local level for new members who are not familiar with a lot of things that we'd like for them to do."



► Huntsville cattleman Robert Bruner, former president of the Beef Development Center of Texas, presents a check for \$68,000 to Bill Herrington, Mount Calm, past president of the Texas Angus Association, at the 2001 TAA annual meeting. Pictured are (from left) E.M. Holt, Weimar; Herrington; Bruner; Paul Carpenter, Saint Jo; and Bill Clark, Houston.

## New project

The BDCT is researching the possibility of conducting a new project this summer that would use a feedbunk system to measure

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feed efficiency. Hillert says the BDCT may form a partnership with Texas A&M University and the Tom J. Moore Cattle Co. to purchase a feedbunk system from Grow Safe Systems.

“It is like a continuous-line feedbunk, and it allows multiple bulls to eat at one time,” Hillert says. “It is more of a real-world environment than the Pinpointer system, where you actually have to train the cattle to go up and eat.”

Hillert says they would be able to put

about 90 bulls in a pen, with five bulls per bunk. They are looking at purchasing 18 bunks. “They each have scales under them so they can weigh the amount of feed that goes in there,” he adds. “All the cattle will have transponder ear tags so we will know exactly which bulls are going up there and eating.”

The bulls wouldn’t have an assigned feedbunk and could eat whenever they wanted without having to be trained to go into a certain gate.

Hillert says they will know by May 1

whether they will be able to conduct the feed efficiency trials.

“It is a pretty big investment for us,” he says. “We are trying to invest in our customers.”



**Editor’s Note:** *Craig Hillert says the next BDCT test (Test 3-2) will receive cattle July 10-14. Eligible bulls must have been born between Aug. 1, 2002, and Nov. 30, 2002. For more information on the test, contact the BDCT at (936) 878-2749.*