

Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president



Association cornerstones

Every great breed or association is based on a strong foundation. For us it's the Angus breed of cattle backed by the people who breed and raise them, the Association that serves the breed, and the programs. These four elements are the basis of our Angus industry as we know it today, and no part is stronger than the weakest link.

I firmly believe that, as cattlemen committed to an improved and profitable beef industry, our success in the future lies in these four key elements just as it did for those past developers of the breed.

From the beginning we've been blessed with a great breed with which to work. The founding fathers of the Angus breed in Scotland in the 1700s had a goal in mind — to produce a functional black, polled animal with superior eating qualities.

It is interesting to note, as we struggle to emphasize the need for quality and consistency in today's beef industry, that we work with a breed that, from its earliest recorded history, was designed to produce a quality carcass. Not all breeds can boast that. Throughout their early history and to their current position in the beef industry, Angus cattle have been a firm foundation for adding consistency and quality to our end product. This brings me to a point.

The breeds and breeders who can supply the genetics to produce cattle meeting the specifications of today's consumer will be in the driver's seat. This has been so, not only during the herd reduction phase of the cattle cycle, but also in the growth and expansion phases.

There is no secret about the industry's needs. Cattle must grade USDA Choice or better and Yield Grade (YG) 3 or better. Cattle must reach the preferred grade and yield at acceptable weights.

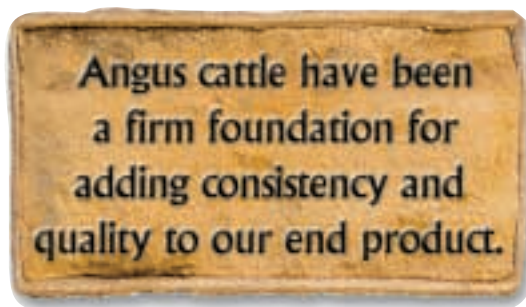
Your breed, with its strength and diversity, backed by solid carcass evaluation programs for identifying superior genetics, will continue to fill the needs of discriminating consumers, especially through programs like the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program.

But Angus are only the raw product. They are refined, improved, cared for,

promoted and marketed by people — farmers and ranchers, men and women, sons and daughters. The people who make up the Association membership represent a full range of walks of life and occupations.

The common thread is that Angus breeders love the land and enjoy the livestock they raise. They take great pride in their breed, and they commit to improving the breed and their own Angus programs.

It's this commitment that has firmly placed this breed in the forefront of the beef cattle industry. No breed will prosper beyond the commitment and dedication of the people involved.



A third element in the strong foundation of the Angus breed is your Association. Founded in 1883, the American Angus Association was formed for the purpose of "collecting, verifying, preserving, and publishing the pedigrees of certain cattle of the breed known as Polled Aberdeen-Angus, so as to maintain unimpaired the purity of said breed and to do and perform such other acts incidental and supplementary thereto as will, in the judgment of such Association, best promote the interest of said breed of cattle in America."

Today those words still form the basis for nearly all things we do in Association work. The article in this issue by Keith Evans covers the challenges and opportunities that have been confronted during the 116-year history of the Association (see page 78). I hope you take time to read it. If you're a student of history and you wonder what went on during the past century and more, Keith has done a great job of compiling the information.

That brings me to present-day programs. Your investment in the Association is an investment in programs. You read about them all the time in the *Angus Journal*.

To highlight a few, let me start with Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) as the largest database of information in the beef cattle industry. American Angus Association members are measuring their cattle for performance at record rates. More than 486,000 weights were processed in the first seven months of fiscal 1999; that's 36,000 more than a year earlier.

More than 2,100 bulls have been progeny-tested for carcass merit since 1972, when the Association started this service. In fact, 89 of the top 100 sires in number of registrations this year have carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs). The associations that own such a database will drive the beef cattle industry of the future.

No other breed has the advantage of the largest end-product marketing program in the world — the CAB Program. Projected sales for 1999 are 480 million pounds. Each month seems to set new records. As the packer base has grown for the CAB Program, you and your commercial customers have had increased opportunity to capitalize on the CAB Program and the demand it's building for Angus cattle.

Again this year the Association will support members with a strong national advertising program. It will highlight the advantages that Angus bull users enjoy. The new hard-hitting ads will appear in livestock publications starting this fall.

From the ground up, our youth programs are the envy of the industry. Now more than 10,000 members strong, the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) offers unique leadership and education programs while giving young people the thrill of owning and exhibiting Angus cattle. This, backed by a strong Activities Department serving livestock shows across the country, gives us an opportunity to display quality Angus cattle.

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No organization is complete without information and communication. Our growing Angus Information Management System (AIMS) is fast becoming a valuable link for producers to enjoy the electronic recordkeeping offered by the program.

The *Angus Journal* continues to link the Association with registered producers; and the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, with commercial producers. The growth and acceptance of these publications, along with the information sharing, has been a valuable foundation to producer communication.

Last and certainly not least, we take great pride in member services. One-day turn-around time is a norm for the Angus

business, and we view this as one of the valuable services to our registered producers.

A totally new computer system went online May 6, helping us continue to offer the best service in the industry. RODEO (Re-engineering of Data Elements & Outputs) gives us state-of-the-art computer technology as we enter the new millennium (see page 200). We also still offer a friendly voice on the phone if you have questions or concerns.

As a registered Angus breeder, you are in an enviable position in the cattle industry. You have a premier end-product marketing program to help stimulate demand. Angus are known for their superior carcasses and for a host of other economically important traits. To most packer buyers today, commercial cattlemen and feeders, Angus is the breed of choice.

But just having Angus cattle won't be enough in the years ahead. As a breed and as individual breeders, we must put more pressure than ever on improved genetics and within-herd genetic improvement. Today's average of the Angus breed won't be good enough in a decade or two.

The strength of the Angus breed, individual breeders and the American Angus Association helped bring about today's Angus industry. The foundation has been laid. The growing demand for Angus cattle will continue if we continue to offer the best product to our customers, explain the Angus advantages and support the programs that place this breed in the lead of our competition.

