



# Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president

## Survey reports Angus use in past, predicts future use

The Angus breed continues to increase its market share in the beef business. This was confirmed again in February by a research report the American Angus Association contracted with *Farm Journal*. ABG Inc., Indianapolis, Ind., administered the research. This report is similar to other projects conducted since 1989 by Rockwood Research.

Every other year, we conduct the survey to determine the breeds of cattle that make up commercial cow herds, what breeds of bulls these operators purchased in the past 12 months, and what breeds of bulls they intend to purchase in the coming 12 months. Our survey is directed entirely to commercial cattle producers; anyone indicating they are in the registered business is eliminated from the survey results.

During a decade or more of survey results, producers who mention Angus as the primary or one of the primary breeds in their commercial cow herds has steadily increased. This year 54% of producers reported using black Angus or black Angus crossbreds in their cow herds. This compares equally to the survey results from 1998.

In another category, however, producers simply responded with *crossbred*. When asked about specific breed makeup in that category, 68% indicated that black Angus was represented in those genetics. In yet another survey category, producers responded with the word *composite*, and when further questioned, those respondents indicated 88% of the time that black Angus was represented in the makeup of their

composite cow herd. I think this points out the difficulty in identifying the makeup of the nation's commercial cow herd, but our survey team continues to work with staff in acquiring the most accurate results achievable. We do know the Angus influence has increased in the past decade as black Angus bulls sire more replacement females.

The percentage of commercial producers who use Angus bulls has increased more dramatically. In February, 59% of producers interviewed said they had purchased an

Angus bull in the previous 12 months.

This compares with 47% in the 1998 survey and 39% in the 1996 survey. In the first survey in 1989, 27% of the cattlemen surveyed indicated they had purchased an Angus bull. So in slightly more than a decade, Angus bull usage has increased more than 30%.

No other breed showed an increase in bull use from a year earlier. Charolais bull use was second with 13%, and the use of crossbred or composite bulls was steady at 3% and 1%, respectively.

Commercial producers say they intend to use about the same percentage of Angus bulls in the future. When asked what breed of bulls they intend to purchase in the next 12 months, some 56% said they would buy black Angus. This compares to Charolais, the next most popular breed, at 14% followed by Limousin at 8%, Simmental at 7% and Hereford at 6%.

Every person included in the survey qualified as a commercial cattle producer. The average number of brood cows owned

by the group surveyed was 117 head. Farm and ranch size varied dramatically from the West, which had an average ranch size of 6,525 acres, to the Southeast, which had an average operation size of 684 acres. The overall average size of the operations was 1,627 acres.

The sampling represents 34 states, which comprise 96% of the cow-calf operators in the United States, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) figures.

The survey results are encouraging for all producers of registered Angus cattle. With a national beef cow herd that has declined in the past few years to its current 33.5 million head, our growth as a breed has resulted in increased market share. And as the national cow herd begins its cyclical growth period, it should mean even better times for registered Angus breeders as more Angus bulls are used on a growing number of replacement females.

The Association and its programs also have benefited from the trend in bull-buying decisions. In 1989 we recorded just more than 59,000 bulls. Last year we recorded 108,639, representing 41.6% of total registrations in fiscal 1999. The vast majority of those bulls were transferred to commercial cattle producers.

It would appear that if we want to boost the market share for Angus bulls, we must continue to improve our breeding programs. Registered Angus breeders have accepted the challenge to do just that as our database of performance information grows for the Angus breed. It is this database that assists breeders in offering the most predictable breed of cattle in the beef industry.

There is no reason to believe the current trend for Angus bulls will not continue as we look to the programs that improve the Angus breed and market Angus genetics to all segments of the beef cattle industry.

*Richard J. Spader*

