

## Full of potential

*May comes but once each year, but what a marvelous time it is to be engaged in the production of Angus cattle. As often as I have experienced the sweet aroma of late spring, I never cease to be amazed at the freshness that emanates from blossoming apple trees, fresh green grass and blue skies.*

### A complex creation

As much as we are around new birth, whether it be new flowers, trees or animals, we often come to think of it as a commonplace occurrence — you know, a cow lies down and delivers a calf, hopefully without assistance. She licks off the calf, it nurses for the first time on wobbly legs, and within 12 hours it's ready to play — under the watchful eye of mother, of course.

As we watch the antics of this new arrival, little do we think about the genetics that

were combined with the union of its parents to create this new being. We give only a passing thought to the planning that took place prior to the mating, the selection criteria that were considered before the new life was conceived, or the historical aspects of the development and management of the animal's ancestors that are an intricate part of its existence.

A new calf is such a complex creation of nature. Although its genetic capacity or transmitting ability is made up of an

equal share of genes from both parents, the individual is unique in its own right. It may happen to be a bull calf destined for an attitude change en route to a southwest Kansas feedyard. It might turn out to be a junior Angus project for some lucky youngster or a commercial bull destined for a remote ranch in southwest Texas.

If fate would have it, a young bull calf could also be identified early as having the genetic potential for service as an artificial insemination (AI) sire and end up changing the profile of the beef industry.

By the same token, a young heifer calf might be named grand champion female at the North American or at Denver and mother a new line of seedstock through embryo transplant (ET). On the other hand, she might just be standing under the wrong tree and be struck by lightning in a thunderstorm.

### Combination of circumstances

The combination of circumstances and outcomes is mind-boggling. An individual's full potential, however, can never be fully understood unless that new calf is born alive, grows within a proper contemporary

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### ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

**Chief executive officer:** John Crouch

**Executive administrative assistant:** Diane Strahm

**Vice presidents: Finance**—Richard Wilson ■ **Information & Data Programs**—Bill Bowman ■ **Industry Relations**—Jim Shirley

### DEPARTMENTAL STAFF BY DIVISION

**Finance**—Kenny Miller, assistant director of finance; Richard Wilson, director of finance

**Industry Relations**—James Fisher, director of junior activities; Sara Moyer, director of AngusSource®; Jim Shirley, director of activities; Shelia Stannard, director of communications & events

**Information & Data Programs**—Lou Ann Adams, director of information systems; Bill Bowman, director of performance programs; Ty Groshans, director of commercial programs and assistant director of performance programs; Scott Johnson, director of Angus Information Management Software; Sally Northcutt, director of genetic research; Bryce Schumann, director of member services & office management; Carol Waller, assistant director of member services & office management

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Nancy Thelen, Saline, Mich. For a complete list of officers, see page 36.

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group and is compared to others by having its data processed through Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®).

The point I am attempting to make is that as a result of genetic variation, each new calf is potentially a genetic outlier that could offer a huge contribution to the breed. But that potential can never be realized unless its owner can provide the calf opportunity to express its genetics and measure the differences in its performance relative

to others given the same opportunity to perform.

It is for this reason that your American Angus Association has worked hard and invested heavily in the development of tools to measure and identify the genetic potential in young cattle rather than waiting until they are mature parents. And herein lies the basis for the success of the Angus breed and the American Angus Association.

The irony of the situation is that, like new birth, the Association database and its performance recording and evaluation processes are taken for granted by many

breeders and Association members. So, when we get to feeling like things are just so-so and that we need something new and exciting to use in merchandising our cattle, we need to be cognizant of the fact that as Angus breeders and Angus affiliates we have access to the most powerful set of breed improvement and merchandising tools in the history of the beef industry. Their usefulness is only limited by our creativity.



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