

Angus Membership 101

Director of Member Services Jerry Cassady shares programs and services available to members of the American Angus Association.

Story & photo by **Troy Smith**, field editor

‘Angus Membership 101’ was the title of the leadoff presentation in a series of informational workshops offered during the 2016 Angus Convention hosted Nov. 5-7 by the American Angus Association in Indianapolis, Ind. Jerry Cassady, the Association’s director of member services, offered an overview of the organization, the focus of which has broadened from breed registry to provider of a growing list of services and programs designed to manage and market Angus cattle.

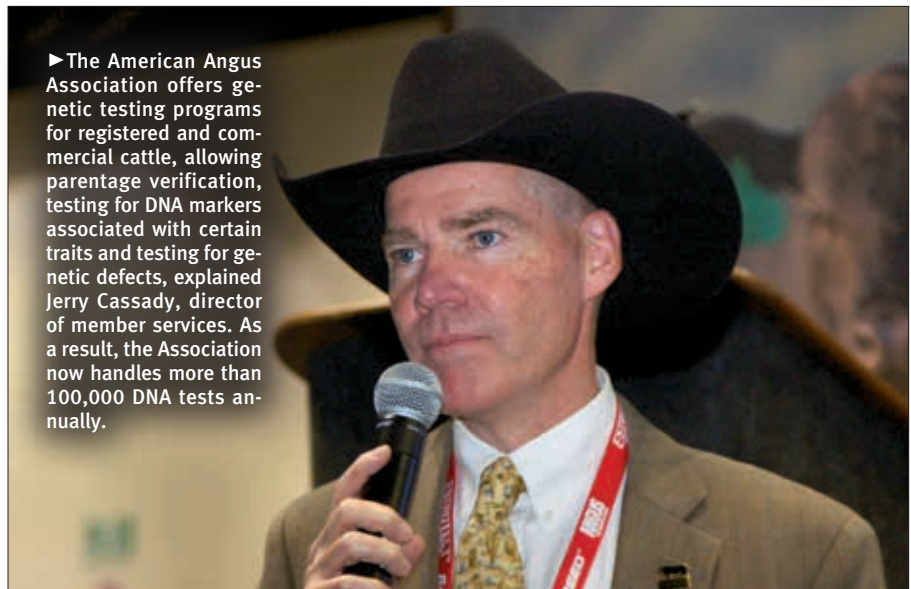
According to Cassady, the Association’s regular members, life members, junior members and affiliate members collectively represent about 25,000 individuals and entities. During the last year, member-breeders registered approximately 157,000 bulls and 176,000 females. While many came from large Angus herds, 75% of members’ herds consist of 20 cows or less.

Cassady noted that many Angus breeders rank among cattle producers who utilize reproductive technologies including artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET). For example, of the animals registered in the past 12 months, 53% were offspring of AI sires.

“With more than half of the cattle resulting from AI, you can see how Angus breeders can make a lot of genetic progress in a short amount of time,” stated Cassady.

He explained how, through the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®) program,

participating breeders record and submit performance data — weights and measures, as well as carcass and ultrasound data — to the Association. As a result, the Association’s database is the largest beef cattle database in use. The records are utilized in the American Angus Association’s National Cattle



► The American Angus Association offers genetic testing programs for registered and commercial cattle, allowing parentage verification, testing for DNA markers associated with certain traits and testing for genetic defects, explained Jerry Cassady, director of member services. As a result, the Association now handles more than 100,000 DNA tests annually.

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Evaluation to calculate expected progeny difference (EPD) values and selection indexes for breeders and their customers to use in making genetic selection decisions.

An animal’s EPDs are calculated using information based on pedigree (parents’ performance), the individual’s own performance, the performance of the individual’s progeny and now DNA information. Cassady said DNA testing for genomic markers associated with certain performance traits now allows this information to

be included in the calculation of genomic-enhanced EPDs having greater accuracy.

“In the past, breeders have asked for the formula used so they could calculate EPDs for themselves, but it is a long and complicated formula,” said Cassady. “EPDs are kind of like a cell phone. You don’t need

to know how EPDs work as long as you know how to use them — to compare one animal with another on the basis of their offspring’s predicted performance.”

Cassady said the Association also offers genetic-testing programs for registered and commercial cattle, allowing parentage verification, testing for DNA markers associated with certain traits and testing for genetic defects. Accordingly, the Association now handles more than 100,000 DNA tests annually.

More information about the services provided to members of the American Angus Association is available online at www.angus.org.

Cassady’s presentation was part of a series of half-hour workshops hosted Nov. 5-6 in the Angus booth within the trade show at the 2016 Angus Convention. For comprehensive coverage of the Angus Convention, including speaker summaries, links to the full presentations, photos, videos and more, visit www.angus.media/news/Angus-Convention.



Editor’s Note: Troy Smith is a freelance writer and cattleman from Sargent, Neb.