

# Aim High With AIMS

Managing your cow herd has never been easier.

by Brooke Byrd

Getting organized can be difficult if producers don't have management systems in place or if there is much information to sort through. The American Angus Association offers a comprehensive, Windows®-based computer program, Angus Information Management Software (AIMS), to keep information in one location, while also tying to the Association registration and performance programs database.

## Management basics

"It's a recordkeeping software to do everything you need for a registered herd,"

Scott Johnson, AIMS director, says. The software gives a producer the ability to register or transfer animals; obtain updated expected progeny differences (EPDs); report Angus Herd Improvement Record (AHIR) data; maintain breeding and management records; record income, expenses and medical treatment information; and keep track of sales and past and prospective buyers.

With the electronic transfers, Johnson says, registration and transfer information can be e-mailed to the Association one day, with the updated information returning to

the producer the next. "It can literally be done in 24 hours," he says, if submitted without errors.

Producers can also use the simulated breeding component to figure the outcome of prospective breedings. "If I want to find a bull that gives me a combination with a certain cow where the calf EPD is below 1 pound for birth weight, you can tie all the EPDs together and search from thousands of bulls," Johnson says. AIMS users have access to all bull information contained in the *Angus Sire Evaluation Report*.

"You pick a certain cow, tell the program what group of bulls you want to consider, and what's the maximum or minimum on each of these EPDs," Johnson continues. "It will tell you which bulls work for whatever goals you're trying to accomplish."

## Stay organized

The real value of the program, Johnson says, is having all data organized and compiled in one spot and being able to sort through it. In addition to storing almost any record imaginable about individual animals, information about pens of animals can also be recorded. Johnson

**Fig. 1: Everything in AIMS starts with the screen shown below.**

Menu commands and icons provide access to many other AIMS operations.

All basic animal information is shown in this area.

Eleven tabs organize hundreds of fields.

Pens hold animals that you want to work with as a group. All animals in the pen are listed in this area. Click on a row to change the rest of the screen to that animal.

Animals can be sorted by more than a dozen fields, such as tattoo, tag, birth date and sale lot number, or they can be manually put into the pen in whatever order the user determines.

The main tab area changes depending on the selected tab.

considers this feature especially useful for those with large herds and adds that it can be greatly beneficial to maintaining and recording the information of a proper contemporary group.

A special feature for producers with extensive embryo transfer (ET) programs is the AIMS embryo inventory system.

Johnson says, "You can simulate breeding and flushing the donor. You can also keep track of every embryo, down to the horn side you put it in."

Bryce Schumann, Association director of member services and office management, recommends the program's archiving abilities. "If you have a question that dates back three years ago, digging through the old breeding or calving records on paper takes much longer," he says.

### Marketing tool

One of the most widely used components of AIMS is the customer manager. "You can keep track of thousands of names and about 35 fields of data for each," Johnson says. In addition to basic contact information, customized fields allow producers to list such details about customers as how they met, if they're long-term customers or just getting in the business, and the type of stock in which they're interested.

Schumann notes that producers can use these customer histories to help with marketing. "If you know a producer primarily buys high-growth bulls and is not looking for calving ease bulls," he says, "you could pull all that information out and have it available to them."

The different reports available with AIMS also serve as marketing tools. It's possible to sort bulls by EPDs or pedigree data and present that information to prospective buyers as a handout.

### Keeping it together

Commercial and registered Angus producer Ken Dunn, Teton, Idaho, uses the software extensively to keep track of his approximately 475 registered and 125 commercial cows. "We use it for as much individual data as we can put on each individual cow," he says, including birth, weaning and yearling weights; ultrasound data; and breeding and calving records.

"The reason I started using it is to keep track of breeding records," Dunn continues. AIMS provides an easy way to maintain all his information in a single place and also allows him to use that data in herd management practices. "It's really handy to make calving reports from breeding records to take with you into the field," he explains,

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**Fig. 2: Registration information is entered on one screen, with many fields filled in automatically when a new calf is first added to the system.**

**Fig. 3: Weaning information can be entered in this single-view or a spreadsheet view. Yearling data is entered on a similar screen and includes pelvic measurements as well as bull test information and scrotal data.**

**Fig. 4: More than 35 fields are provided for customer information. Groups of customers can be made on any criteria and used for specialized reports.**

noting that he can instantly see which sire a calf is by and record calving and birth weight data at the same time.

He is also using the electronic transfer and registration features, as he has just begun to transfer his bulls to their new owners. The Association's new service of sending commercial customers the updated EPDs of bulls transferred to them, Dunn says, is what prompted him to start transferring the papers to his customers.

"Given that I'm going to transfer all those animals to my customers, it's much easier to do that electronically," Dunn continues. "Because AIMS is maintained by the Association, that adds a tremendous amount of value." He adds that he especially appreciates being able to send in all his registration information and AHIR data and get it back within 24 hours.

"If I had to keep track of all those records

by hand, and if I had to turn in the AHIR data by hand, it would be an unmanageable task," he says. With the AIMS program, instead of searching in pickup seats and cluttered drawers, "we can get all that information accurately to the Association and back efficiently."

The sales management component goes hand-in-hand with electronic transfers, Dunn says. "Because it now ties the animals they've purchased to my customers, it's much easier to find what each person has purchased. It's easy to determine what an individual has been purchasing and then tailor a marketing program for that customer."

To learn more about AIMS, visit [www.angus.org/aims](http://www.angus.org/aims) to download a brochure or watch an informational video, or contact Johnson at (816) 383-5100.



## Helpful hints

Scott Johnson, American Angus Association director of Angus Information Management Software (AIMS), offers these hints for common problems producers experience with the AIMS program.

- ▶ **Updates:** "When you run a software update, you do not want to have that program running," Johnson says. "If it's running in the background, then there are locked files that can't be updated." Close AIMS before updating with any registration or EPD information, or when patching or updating the program itself.
- ▶ **Backups:** "Always make a backup," Johnson emphasizes. "Make a backup before you update, make one right after you update and make one at the end of the week, every week." Backing up the program can prevent data loss and extra work.

## Version 2.4



For those already familiar with the American Angus Association's Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) program, Version 2.4 was recently released with updated changes. "We continue to make improvements that customers suggest," says Scott Johnson, AIMS director.

Extensive changes were made to the program's transferring capabilities, including ways to better handle what membership the animal is transferred to and easier ways to apply the same buyer to an entire pen of animals. Also added was the ability to use the "Sales" tab to set up a transfer without duplication of effort.

Another major change was the addition of expected progeny differences (EPDs) for calving ease direct (CED) and calving ease maternal (CEM), as well as the new Weaned Calf \$Value index (\$W) and the Cow Energy Value (\$EN) predictive tool. These new tools are available on animal, simulated breeding and National Cattle

Evaluation (NCE) screens. EPDs are now also available on the main screen, making them easier to view; entire pens can be sorted by any EPD or accuracy.

Changes make AIMS more compatible with the Beef Record Service (BRS), which provides a system for commercial producers to keep performance records on their animals. Since the only required fields are sex and unique identification (ID), commercial producers can use the software to keep individual animal records. Finally, more than 100 changes were made to fix minor problems, streamline various procedures and make the program easier to use.

"We're always looking for ways to make it easier to keep your records updated with the Association's," Johnson says. "Much of this program has been designed with input from the users. It will probably never be finished because people keep coming up with good ideas."