



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Comings and goings

As we continue to look at challenges before us, we should consider the ever-increasing comings and goings in our industry. By that I include the shrinking number of farms and ranches and the short average life span of a seedstock operation.

Fewer

In the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reported 804,595 farms with a total of 35.2 million beef cows and heifers that had calved in inventory. The 2002 census reported 796,436 farms with beef cow herds and an inventory of 34.4 million beef cows and heifers that had calved. That's a 1% decline in the number of beef-producing farms. And while the beef herd may be expected to expand, the number of farms is not.

Sticking around

At industry meetings, we often hear quotes that the average life expectancy of a seedstock operation is about seven years, with the average life span of a new herd being even shorter. Angus herds appear to be a little more long-lived. At last check, the average length of active membership (actively registering cattle) for life and regular members of the American Angus Association was nearly 12 years.

Certainly helping that number out are Historic Herds honored by the Association for having been in continuous production of registered Angus cattle by the same family for 50 years or more. These herds testify to the

functionality of the Angus cow, the marketability of Angus bulls and the dedication of Angus breeders.

A growing membership means new members. In fiscal year (FY) 2004, the Association added 2,982 new regular members to its membership rolls. From FY 1997 to FY 2004, active memberships increased from 32,124 to 35,096, a 9.25% increase. Still, if we're gaining nearly 3,000 members a year and total active memberships have increased by only 3,000 in the past seven years, about 2,500 members are exiting the business each year.

A few challenges this presents include:

- **Shrinking number of farms.** Is this due to retirements, consolidation, urban encroachment? And what does that mean to the customer base of Angus seedstock producers in the future?
- **Diverse membership.** We need programs and services to help advance the Historic Herds and to help successfully launch the new breeders.
- **Member retention.** What causes the comings and goings in the seedstock business? How can we retain members for the long haul?

API staff

We've had some comings and goings within our own Angus Productions Inc. (API) staff this spring. Annie Jensen moved from Web Services to advertising coordinator. She will be covering the territory represented by regional managers Matt Caldwell, John Dickinson, Vern Frey, David Mullins, Jared Murnin, Matt Printz and Rod Wesselman.

Rich Masoner is now Web Services manager and sales coordinator. Rich will bring a strong sales emphasis to the team. If you're ready to talk about a Web site or banner ad, you can talk to Rich in person at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) and several other summer events.

We welcomed two Jennifers this June. Jenny Leach, a graduate of Southwest Missouri State University, was hired as Web Services coordinator. Jen Biser joins the editorial team as the API summer intern (see page 56). Jen hails from Maryland, but graduated from Texas A&M University this past May.

Associate Editor Corinne Patterson left the editorial team at the end of June. She and her husband, Tom, are returning to Kansas to pursue interests there. Corinne is certainly one of our summer intern success stories. She was the editorial summer intern in 2001 and helped cover the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) the following January. Corinne joined API full-time as an assistant editor after graduating from Kansas State University in May 2002. She's played a major role on our editorial team for the last three years. While we hate to see her go, we're excited for the opportunities she and Tom are taking, and we wish them every success.

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