

# Field Notes

► by John Dickinson, David Gazda and Matt Printz, regional managers, American Angus Association

## Membership benefits

*American Angus Association regional managers offer insight about how producers may benefit from their breed organization.*

### What are the three biggest benefits to belonging to the American Angus Association?

**Matt Printz:** The largest benefit of becoming a member of the American Angus Association is the access to useful information that the Association supplies its members about their registered Angus cattle. With an extensive pedigree and individual performance database, the accurate and reliable information provided to its members adds value to their cattle and to their operations. The Association also generates genetic selection tools such as expected progeny differences (EPDs) and \$Value indexes to assist producers in improving the genetics in their herds.

Secondly, the Association provides a support staff specializing in different areas to assist breeders in making important decisions concerning their herds. From the Member Services Department answering questions on processing information on a particular animal to Angus Productions Inc. (API) assisting with advertising, the Association has

someone who can answer nearly any question pertaining to Angus cattle production.

Finally, belonging to the Association allows breeders to participate in numerous activities, such as educational seminars and livestock shows. Many of these events allow breeders from all over the country to share ideas about varying production aspects.

**David Gazda:** Membership in the Association allows members access to the largest performance database of any purebred cattle breed organization in the world. Through the Performance Programs Department, participation in Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) provides breeders the opportunity to objectively evaluate comprehensive performance data, thus allowing them to make more informed decisions regarding their breeding programs.

Secondly, membership provides breeders access and opportunity to utilize many other programs and services offered by the various departments at the Association.

Finally, members benefit from an aggressive national advertising program that promotes the use and virtues of Angus genetics in today's marketplace, as well as various Association-sponsored workshops, programs

and conferences that serve to better inform and further educate both purebred and commercial cattlemen.

**John Dickinson:** By definition, the word "association" describes a connection to a group of people or organizations. In this case, your Association membership links you to the most popular beef breed in the world and allows you to come together with your peers to shape the future of the Angus breed and its position as the cornerstone of the beef industry. Your dues allow you to be part of a brand that has become synonymous with quality and value.

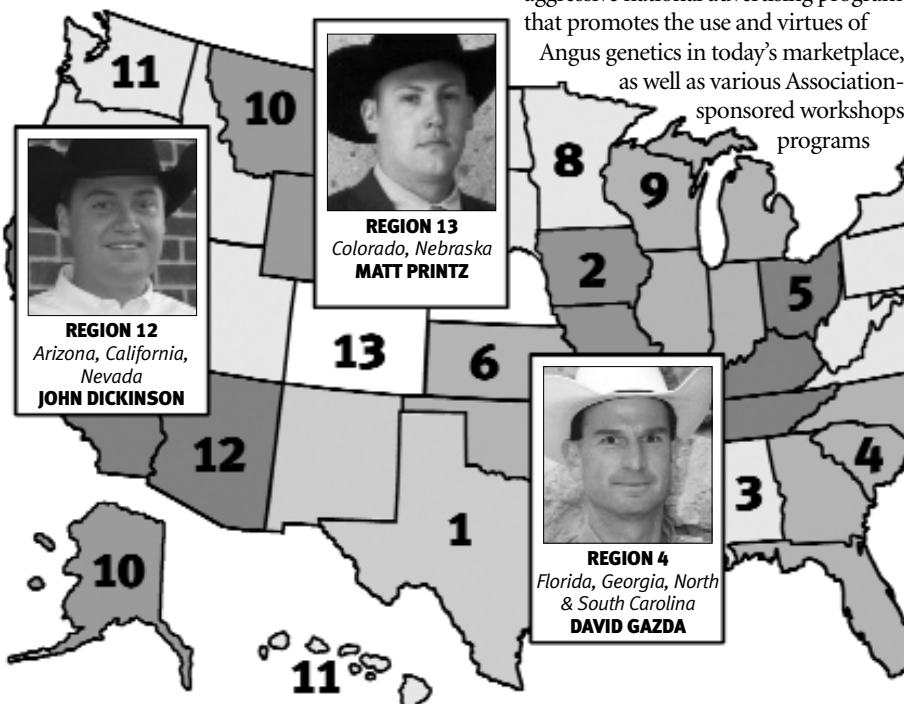
Your membership also allows you, as a producer, to enroll in AHIR. This service provides members with a recordkeeping outlet, processes their performance information and then converts that data into EPDs. Backed by the largest performance database in the world, Association members have access to the most accurate genetic selection tools available.

Another benefit would be the programs and services of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). For nearly 50 years the NJAA has provided a learning environment for young Angus producers. This program has broadened from cattle shows and field days to include scholarships, leadership training and a variety of useful information regarding the production of registered seedstock. NJAA-sponsored shows and activities are available to its membership from coast to coast, giving youth the opportunity to travel and meet new friends. This past year, more than \$25,000 was awarded to NJAA members in the form of scholarships. The NJAA is one of the principal assets of our Association.

### The Association puts a considerable amount of funding into supporting shows and events during the summer.

**What benefit do members receive from this expenditure?**

**Dickinson:** The Association participates in premium support of more than 170 open and junior shows throughout the year. Additionally, staff members are sent to many of these shows and events to do publicity work, including show reports and photos that eventually become press releases. Last



year more than 77,000 printed and e-mailed news releases and nearly 40,000 photos were sent out by the Association to media at the local, state and national levels. This publicity benefits producers by profiling their programs in front of the industry and general public alike.

Summer shows and events are also a great gathering place for members. These events provide an environment for social interaction where we can meet and discuss industry issues. They also present a marketing environment where we can showcase our breeding programs toward fellow producers.

**Printz:** Exhibiting Angus cattle at a show allows a producer to show his product in front of potential customers who may be in the market to purchase Angus genetics. A show may serve as another tool to market your herd and gain recognition among a subset of Angus customers, primarily additional Angus breeders.

The Association supports numerous junior shows. These junior shows provide a learning atmosphere where children and young adults can compete against one another and gain knowledge from the experience. Even if a junior member has no intention of being involved in cattle production, the lessons learned and skills gained are invaluable tools to enter society as a contributing adult.

#### **If I had an idea I wanted the Association to consider, how could I get that idea across?**

**Gazda:** Simply convey your idea in writing or verbally to a Board member, regional manager or directly to the appropriate department staff member at the Association. Contact information for Board members, regional managers and staff can be found in each issue of the *Angus Journal*, as well as on the Association's Web site.

**Printz:** Depending upon the subject matter of the idea, a breeder can pursue several different avenues to present the idea to the Association. If the idea requires a change to an Association rule, the correct channel of communication would be contacting the executive vice president via e-mail, letter or phone. This ensures that the rule change would be presented at a Board meeting, at which time the Board could consider the request and possibly vote on a change.

If the idea does not require a rule change, the first person to contact would be the resident regional manager, who would present the idea to the correct staff member or, at a minimum, would suggest the staff member for the breeder to contact.

**Dickinson:** There are a variety of ways to get your thoughts and ideas to the Association. If you wanted to discuss specific ideas about current programs or future programs, you could contact the Association office directly.

Feel free to contact your regional manager, as well. Our contact information is printed with this column, and we reply to phone or e-mail.

Another possibility would be to get in touch with your Board of Directors. Any of these options would work, and if you're looking for contact information, go to [www.angus.org/general.html](http://www.angus.org/general.html).

#### **How can the Association help me promote my herd?**

**Gazda:** Promotion of a breeder's program, regardless of size, can be effectively and economically achieved through the breed's official monthly publication, the *Angus Journal*. Secondly, the *Angus Beef Bulletin* is published six times a year and has a circulation of 84,000, plus. The *Angus Beef Bulletin*, the Association's publication designed for commercial cattlemen, is mailed to affiliate (nonmember) producers who have purchased a registered Angus animal and had the registration paper properly transferred to their names during the last three years. It is an Angus breeder's most cost-effective way to reach potential commercial bull customers.

In addition, the API Web Services and Special Services departments have a staff of qualified professionals who are available to create and design effective Web sites, sale books, brochures, fliers and other promotional materials for producers' programs.

The *Angus Journal* and the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, along with the Web Services and Special Services departments, provide one-stop shopping for Angus breeders and are the most cost-efficient and effective means to promote one's program.

**Printz:** The Association provides numerous opportunities to promote one's herd. The most obvious would be the extensive database the Association maintains on all registered cattle. As the Performance Programs Department provides breeders with accurate, up-to-date technology concerning pedigree and performance information on each registered animal, breeders can use that information to present additional insight to their potential customers.

#### **As a member, do I have any particular responsibilities?**

**Dickinson:** As a member of the Association, your responsibility falls within the course and scope of the guidelines set forth in the Association's Charter and Bylaws. Read thoroughly and become acquainted with the *Breeder's Reference Guide*, mailed as an insert in the March *Angus Journal* and available online at [www.angus.org/newmem.html](http://www.angus.org/newmem.html). To maintain a strong organization, it is imperative that we understand the rules and procedures that are currently in place.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 178

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## ▣ FIELD NOTES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 177

Additionally, I feel that your responsibility as a member is to let me know how the Association can better serve you. If you have concerns or questions about a current program or you need a program or service to fit your particular needs, feel free to give me a call or e-mail. We will generate more progress if we are aware of the issue.

**Printz:** Perhaps the most important responsibility as an Association member is simply to become involved in Association activities. As a member you have a voice within the Association, and it is important to convey your opinions to the leadership and staff at the Association for them to continue meeting membership expectations.

In addition, as an active member it is important to communicate with potential members who can both benefit from membership and may also contribute to the Association in terms of ideas and leadership.

**If you are already a member of the Association, what further benefits do you get from belonging to a state or regional association?**

**Printz:** In addition to being a member of the American Angus Association, belonging

to a state or regional association provides one more platform to meet and become acquainted with other Angus breeders and Angus customers. Most state and regional associations publish a directory and/or publication with a respectable circulation or availability. This directory provides an operation with another opportunity to share operation information and contacts with the public and potential customers.

Furthermore, several state associations conduct annual tours, which visit members in various portions of the state. If an operation is a member of an association that conducts tours, being included in the itinerary provides an opportunity to visit and compare to other Angus operations within the same region.

**Gazda:** State and regional associations exist, like the American Angus Association, to promote the breed, serve as a communication mechanism, and provide programs and services for their members. Membership in these associations may also present one with the opportunity to assume important leadership roles within the organization.

Additional benefits may include the opportunity to participate in an association-sponsored sale, receive a monthly newsletter, or be a part of the association's membership

handbook or directory. However, many find the contacts made, the breeders met and the lifelong friendships developed the most rewarding benefits of being a member of these associations.

In a recent North Carolina Angus Association newsletter, J.F. Lancaster, president of that organization, surmised the worth of membership in a state association simply as "... the informal knowledge gained, the association with other members and the friendships developed." Indeed, as one large, nationally recognized financial corporation once advertised — membership has its privileges.

**Dickinson:** Most state and regional associations host their own consignment sales. This provides marketing outlets for producers of any size, and it allows consignors to help share the expenses and costs accrued through managing a sale.

If you have interest in taking a leadership role, your local, state and regional associations are great places to start. Get involved as an officer or committee chairman to help promote Angus cattle and strengthen the position of the breed in your area!

