



Up Front

► by **John Crouch**, executive vice president

Realize the tradeoffs of superlatives

Human nature, being what it is, seems to reveal that most of us are enamored with superlatives. When I was growing up, my brother and I became really excited when we learned that the Barnum & Bailey Circus was coming to town. The thrill of the “big top” was almost equal to the county fair, and we could hardly wait for the train to arrive. I shall never forget my first sight of an elephant and a giraffe. Their immense size was overwhelming.

Those that stand apart

Likewise, I was equally impressed with the 514-foot home run hit by Mickey Mantle, the height of the Empire State Building in New York City, and the speed of the Concorde as it traversed the ocean between Great Britain and the United States. Superlatives give us warm, fuzzy feelings — something to talk about and to hope for. Everyone aspires to greatness in some manner — to be recognized, to do something that sets them apart from others.

Those of us in the cattle industry are no different. For example, nothing can equal the feeling of accomplishment associated with capturing a blue ribbon in a highly competitive national Angus show. A purple rosette adds icing to the cake.

The same feelings are experienced when

one produces a bull that tops a nationally recognized gain test and sells for top dollar. Competition is good! Competition promotes growth and development. Competition exists in every phase of our lives and professions. It is healthy — most of the time.

Searching for extremes

The use of superlative data has been a part of commercial beef production for many years, because normally those animals that weighed more fetched more money at the auction barn; hence, it is not difficult to understand the quest for bigger animals.

Some years ago my friends Roy Wallace, vice president of beef programs for Select Sires Inc., and Doug and Molly Hoff, owners of Hoff's Scotch Cap Angus Ranch, and I were the guests of the late Doug David of

Gulf Pacific Ranches in Idaho for an elk hunt. After considerable preparation and anticipation, we gathered at the ranch. Following the first day of the hunt, we all endured belabored excuses and a long explanation by Mr. Wallace as to how he was able to miss a trophy elk from a range of 20 yards.

Ensuing conversation led to cows, and Molly and I concluded that it would be a lofty achievement for an Angus breeder to develop a cow herd that posted an average birth weight (BW) expected progeny difference (EPD) of less than +4 pounds (lb.) and weaning weight (WW), milk (MILK) and yearling weight (YW) EPDs of more than +20, +10 and +40 lb., respectively.

In retrospect, we grossly underestimated the power of accurate EPDs. Little did we know that in the year 2005, the average of all 2004-born animals in the American Angus Association database would be +2.3 for BW and +38, +19 and +71 for WW, MILK and YW, respectively. In addition, these animals post positive values for percent intramuscular fat (%IMF), or marbling; ribeye area (REA); percent retail product (%RP); and scrotal circumference (SC).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION

3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506-2997
Office hours: (M-F) 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Central)
phone: (816) 383-5100; fax: (816) 233-9703
e-mail: angus@angus.org ■ home page: www.angus.org

OFFICERS

Minnie Lou Bradley, president, 15591 CR K, Memphis, TX 79245; bradley3@srcaccess.net ■ **John Crouch**, executive vice president, 3201 Frederick Ave., Saint Joseph, MO 64506; jcrouch@angus.org ■ **Ben Eggers**, vice president, 3939 S. Clark, Mexico, MO 65265; eggers@socket.net ■ **Jot Hartley**, treasurer, 1005 W. Canadian, Vinita, OK 74301; jot_hartley@hotmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Terms expiring in 2005—**Leo Baker**, 11440 Angus Ln., Saint Onge, SD 57779; msbaker@mato.com ■ **Gregg Blythe**, 3207 Old River Rd., Decatur, AL 35603; clydec7@aol.com ■ **Bill Davis**, HC 57, Box 4075-1, Sidney, MT 59270; rolrok@direcway.com ■ **Robert (Bob) Schlutz**, 260 Colonel's Dr., Box 66, Columbus Junction, IA 52738; rwschlutz@aol.com ■ **John Schurr**, 40842 Farnam Rd., Farnam, NE 69029; john@schurrtop.com

Terms expiring in 2006—**Al DeClerk**, 3914 Engelberg Rd., Pocahontas, AR 72455; eafherd@cox-internet.com ■ **Joe Hampton**, 2600 Back Creek Church Rd., Mount Ulla, NC 28125; rhampton@webkorner.com ■ **Paul Hill**, 11503 SR 554, Bidwell, OH 45614; champion@zoomnet.net ■ **Dave Smith**, 1601 N. CR 200 E., Greensburg, IN 47240; dsmith@stewartseeds.com ■ **Rob Thomas**, 42734 Old Trail Rd., Baker City, OR 97814; thomasangus@direcway.com

Terms expiring in 2007—**Jarold Callahan**, 2202 N. 11th, Yukon, OK 73099; callahan@expressranches.com ■ **Norman Garton**, RR4, Box 153, Nevada, MO 64772; ngar2@yahoo.com ■ **Jay King**, 28287 Woodside Dr., Rock Falls, IL 61071; svreatly@cin.net ■ **Richard (Dick) Tokach**, 5520 CR 81, Saint Anthony,

ND 58566; rctokach@westriv.com ■ **Phil Trowbridge**, 164 Waltermire Rd., Ghent NY 12075; phil@trowbridgefarms.com

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Executive vice president: 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—Milford Jenkins, director of Foundation development; Kenny Miller, assistant director of finance; Richard Wilson, director of finance
Industry Relations—James Fisher, director of activities & junior activities; Ty Groshans, assistant director of commercial programs; Sara Moyer, director of industry & member communications; Jim Shirley, director of commercial programs; Shelia Stannard, director of activity communications & event coordinator

Information & Data Programs—Lou Ann Adams, director of information systems; Bill Bowman, 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

AMERICAN ANGUS AUXILIARY

President—Shirley Williams, Van Buren, Ark. For a complete list of officers, refer to page 58.

REGIONAL MANAGERS—Refer to page 211.

CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC

President—Jim Riemann, Wooster, Ohio. For a CAB staff listing, refer to page 106.

The tradeoffs

We must further realize these increases are many times accompanied by tradeoffs. As we increase growth traits in the population of Angus cattle, we also increase mature size, as evidenced by positive values for mature cow weight (MW) and mature cow height (MH) EPDs. This leads to increased cow maintenance costs by reducing cow efficiency as predicted in cow energy value (\$EN) and adversely affecting reproductive rates unless nutrition is boosted accordingly.

Another factor resulting from increased growth in Angus cattle is the increase in size of high-quality cuts of beef, which affects portion control in the foodservice industry. Each year this is alluded to by marketers of *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand products at the CAB annual conference.

So, while superlatives may provide us with warm fuzzies and engaging cocktail conversation, they may not always be good for commercial stockmen, whose business is our lifeblood. Since we are the tool-and-die makers for commercial producers, it behooves us to analyze their needs and provide them with properly designed genetic

packages that allow optimum growth balanced with reproductive and compositional merit.

The power of one database is awesome. It provides information for the computation of accurate EPDs and meaningful bioeconomic indexes, which enhance the efficiency of commercial beef production and improve consumer acceptance of high-quality Angus beef throughout the world.



E-MAIL: jcrouch@angus.org