

Angus Talk

Outtakes and interviews from Angus Talk radio



Benefits for Association members

Angus Talk host Doug Medlock recently visited with Jerry Cassidy, American Angus Association director of member services. A familiar face to the Angus community, Cassidy began his current role at the Angus headquarters in March, and is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day membership functions of the organization.

Medlock and Cassidy discussed tools available to Angus members through the Association and benefits of Association membership.

Q: Jerry, how does the American Angus Association help members to effectively raise better-quality cattle?

A: I think our American Angus Association does a great job to help members raise better cattle by offering them the necessary tools to do just that. For example, if you need to increase calving ease or growth or higher-grading cattle, we do have tools that producers can utilize to make that kind of progress. In addition to that, we have recordkeeping and data-management tools that allow people to improve the accuracy of their records, and I think that makes the process easier to implement.

Q: What are some of the tools you have available to the Association members that help with selection decisions?

A: I think the obvious answer to that is the suite of expected progeny differences (EPDs) that we measure and include in our vast database. Right now we have 18 EPDs and seven dollar value indexes (\$Values) that are posted to assist the users of Angus genetics to reduce the risk when they create the next generation. A few less-obvious tools that can also play a big role in improving the genetics would be utilizing our genomics, whether it be [genomically enhanced] EPDs, or using parent verification tools to assure ancestral accuracy, even managing genetic conditions. All three of these examples can be adopted with basically a simple blood test.

Q: Are there benefits or services offered by the Association with which our listeners may not be familiar?

A: Some of the benefits are pretty obvious. Those would be our *Angus Journal*, the highly visited website (www.angus.org) and our *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) program. Ones that folks don't necessarily think of that are certainly available to



► Jerry Cassidy, American Angus Association director of member services

all of our members would be the free Angus Mobile app, for example, and the many functions of AAA Login and the AIMS (Angus Information Management Software) program. We have a searchable Sire Summary. We have EPD lookup, a member lookup, and even the benefits of having a regional manager in your area.

Q: What should Association members keep in mind as they conduct business?

A: What comes to mind for me would be, as with any breed registry, the integrity of the members and the accuracy of ancestor information that we record — birth dates, data submission, etc. All of that plays a big role, and the accuracy of that is something that everybody should keep in mind.

With that, timely office work is something I'd like to remind the membership about. In today's world, it's very important that we stay on top of our paperwork. With genetic testing nowadays for genetic conditions, I think it's imperative that you start your paperwork process early to allow the time for the testing to occur.

Transfers, for example — transfer your papers in a timely fashion. There's nothing

worse than to go to all the trouble of finding a customer, having him buy from you, and then lose that customer simply because you failed to get the paperwork completed after the sale.

Q: How can producers out there utilize their regional manager?

A: Right now we have 12 regional managers that compose our field staff. These are 12 full-time staff members who work with the seedstock producers in their area, and the commercial producers, to promote Angus genetics. They also help improve management practices, and maybe the most important thing would be assisting new members who are wanting to get into the Angus business.

I encourage anyone who's new or has questions to contact your area regional manager. They are here to assist you, and, remember, they are always as close as the phone.

Q: Jerry, with a lot of moving parts to the organization, how can members identify which initiatives or services to use in their operations?

A: There are a lot of moving parts to our organization. It can be a bit overwhelming at times, especially for new members. My advice is to take it in small steps. Challenge yourself to maybe learn one new thing every week. By the end of the year you'll be surprised by how much you've gained.

Also, don't be afraid to ask questions from friends or neighbors, or anybody you regard as a mentor. Get in touch with your regional manager, or call and talk with one of our customer service representatives here at the Association headquarters.

Q: How does membership in the American Angus Association increase an Angus breeder's marketing capabilities?

A: With your membership you have basic marketing opportunities that can certainly help in terms of getting your cattle promoted through our Association. It's long been known that there are opportunities through our Angus Media, and all of the benefits and opportunities that our media team has to assist. You've got your regional manager. Lots of guidance is available when it comes to marketing.

Q: Why is it important for beef producers to be involved in the American Angus Association?

A: Involvement in the American Angus Association has always been, and continues to be, key to the survival of our organization — involvement at the local, regional and then national level. Your voice can make a difference. Our Association has been built by the diversity and strength of its members, plus a vast network of support from commercial partners, feeders, retailers and so many others.

Q: How does an organization of this size ensure it's meeting the needs of both big and small-scale breeders?

A: Well, I'll be honest with you, this is a question I've heard many times while serving as regional manager, and I do continue to hear it as director of member services, as well. I think in all fairness, we should first define what is a small breeder and what is a large breeder. What do those terms really mean?

Did you know the average Angus breeder has fewer than 25 cows? When I ask people that, they're shocked by that number because it's so small. People think they're small breeders, when in fact they're probably above average. I can assure you that the programs that are set up here at the American Angus Association were not implemented with only the largest producers in mind. Many programs have actually a bigger impact on the smaller producers.

A good example of that would be genomic testing your next calf crop. In the old days, a lack of proper contemporary grouping inhibited a lot of folks from getting their EPDs. Now, genomic testing offers a quick fix for that.

I think the short answer to a pretty tough question is that we try very hard to provide programs and services to all members of our organization in a quick, efficient, accurate manner, because that's exactly what our members expect.

Q: The Association is known for its quick turnaround of data. How is it possible to offer such quick response for an organization that size?

A: Good question. Again, the one-day

turnaround service that we have here in the office is basically because of the incredible efforts of so many employees that work right outside my door. The daily volume of work that flows through here is impressive and eye-opening to say the very least. I credit the team here that I work with at the home office. The work gets done, and it goes out the next day.

Q: What drives members of the Association to continue their investment in Angus genetics, and to utilize the programs and services of the organization?

A: Our members are at the center of every program and decision and service that's offered through this organization. Breeders rely on us to process and assist with their registrations and transfers. They expect us to facilitate the DNA services, and oversee all the rules and regulations that we have. Ultimately, these programs are in place to improve the bottom line of our members.

Q: What are some of the most common questions you get from Association members?

A: The most common question I've received so far is, "How can we help members get papers transferred to them from those who have sold registered-Angus, but failed to provide the papers?" I personally have never had much tolerance for this. Our Association has made the transfer process quick, easy and inexpensive, so really there's no excuse not to transfer papers to your new customers if that customer has fulfilled their part of the agreement.

Other common questions may refer to parentage issues, or rule interpretations. Basically, quick advice I would give our membership would be to transfer your papers on a timely basis, and be sure and have DNA on file for all of your turnout bulls, all of your donor cows, and also the parents of those turnout bulls and donor cows.

Q: What are the AAA Login and AIMS programs? How do they benefit members?

A: AIMS stands for Angus Information Management Software. That's helped our members manage herd records for about 15 years now. It's a Windows-

based software program to simplify your recordkeeping.

AAA Login is the landing page for the online recordkeeping service that we provide to our membership. It's used for herd inventory, artificial insemination (AI) certificate inventory, EPD data, submitting data online, registering, transferring online, and much more. It's an intense program that is free. It's a free service available 24/7 to all of our active members.

Q: How will this Association continue to expand its services to its members and their commercial customers?

A: The key to expanding our services, not only to our members but also the commercial producers, is really through education. As our membership grows, more folks need to be aware of what we offer. Events like our Angus Convention, for example, can go a long way to bring awareness to the membership in terms of the programs and services we offer, both to new members, as well as experienced members. Our field staff can also play a key role here in keeping our membership and the commercial producers up to speed on the programs and services that we offer.

Q: What do you see in the future for the Angus breed?

A: The future of the Angus breed is very bright, and therefore the future of our members and customers of Angus genetics is also very bright. Whatever's good for the beef industry is good for Angus; what's good for Angus is good for our members, as well as our commercial supporters. One only has to look at the success of our *Certified Angus Beef* program to know the increasing value of quality Angus genetics. It's never been more important to utilize the right genetics, and with that said, it's never been more important to use Angus.



Editor's Note: For more information on Association services, Jerry recommended visiting the www.angus.org website, or calling the Association at 816-383-5100. Hosted by Doug Medlock, the American Angus Association's Angus Talk radio show features conversations with industry personalities from across the country. The program is broadcast each Saturday at 10 a.m. CT on Sirius XM's Rural Radio, Channel 147. Outtakes featured here are edited.