



# Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

## Navigating the numbers

*The breed trends documented through the National Cattle Evaluation (NCE) show the improvement that can be made by utilizing expected progeny differences (EPDs) to make directional change in our breed pool — even with antagonistic traits. Just look at the increase the breed has made in yearling weight EPDs while keeping birth weights low.*

### Bending the curve

In fact, from 1972 to 2004 the average birth weight EPD moved from +2.0 to +2.3, while the average yearling weight EPD moved from -14 to +71. You can find the genetic trends for Angus EPDs in the forward section of the *Sire Evaluation Summary* or online at [www.angussiresearch.com/genetic.html](http://www.angussiresearch.com/genetic.html).

The numbers would indicate that we have changed the growth curve, making Angus growth to a year competitive with the Exotics while maintaining one of the breed's core assets — its low birth weights.

### Comparing breeds

Now when I say our yearling weights are competitive with the Exotics, what do I mean? Let me show you.

Larry Cundiff, genetic researcher at the Roman L. Hruska Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) presented the new across-breed adjustment factors at the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) annual meeting this April. For complete coverage of the meeting, go online to [www.bifconference.com](http://www.bifconference.com). You can find the table of adjustment factors on page 36 along with

coverage of a few of the sessions beginning on page 88.

Without the adjustment factors, we can't compare EPDs of different breeds because they are not on the same base. But, we can add the breed's adjustment factor to an individual's EPD to get an across-breed EPD (AB-EPD), which is comparable to other AB-EPDs.

Along with the adjustment factors, Cundiff also provided the breed means for birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and milk. The MARC data includes adjustments for 16 breeds. I've narrowed the field to eight in the tables accompanying this article. Tables 1 and 2 (see page 14) present the breed average EPDs according to their respective national cattle evaluations in the left column, the adjustment factor in the middle column and the comparable AB-EPD resulting from adding the adjustment factor to the breed-given EPD in the third column.

Table 1 compares yearling weight EPDs while Table 2 compares birth weight EPDs. Look at how competitive we've become on yearling growth. Only two of the 16 breeds evaluated — Charolais and Simmental —

average higher for growth than Angus, yet Angus still has the edge in birth weight. It's amazing to consider that on an Angus scale, the average birth weight EPD in the Charolais breed would be an 11.3, while the average in the Simmental breed would be a 7.6.

### Protecting the girls

Now, whether adding yearling weight to the breed repertoire is an asset or a detriment depends a lot on how it changes the functionality of the Angus cow — one of the breed's other core assets. The Angus cow's durability, efficiency, mothering ability, fertility and reputation for being comparatively trouble-free have kept her a favorite in the commercial producer's pasture.

Of course, her ability to produce calves that could qualify for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand didn't hurt her marketability, either. Not only is she able to transmit to her calves the black hide that helps them visually qualify for the brand and therefore garner premiums as feeder calves and fed cattle, but she is more likely than any other to transmit the traits that will meet the CAB carcass qualifications and therefore garner the CAB carcass premiums.

Our ability to maintain the value of the Angus cow will rest in our ability to again bend the growth curve by ensuring that the yearling weight we have instilled in the breed does not translate to excessive mature weights, reduced fertility and higher maintenance costs. That's what makes the cow energy value (\$EN) and weaned calf value (\$W) numbers so valuable to the breed.

Reported in dollar savings per cow per year, \$EN provides insight into a cow's metabolic efficiency, assessing differences in cow energy requirements as an expected dollar savings difference in daughters of a

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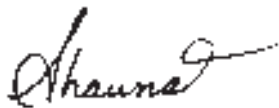
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sire. It may be easy to overlook this number in a seedstock system, where bull progeny are sold from \$1,700-\$10,000 a piece, but in a commercial setting, this number plays a huge role in the profitability of cow-calf operations whose margin is based on feeder calf sales.

Of course, it only makes sense to allow a little more feed to a cow if she'll more than return those feed costs with a larger calf. \$W puts that into perspective. By considering both the input costs and the revenue from outputs, \$W allows you and your customer to compare animals on the basis of the cow's ability to produce relative to her cost to maintain.

You can ignore \$EN and \$W for sires whose progeny are headed to the packing house, but when it comes to the foundation bulls — the bulls that are going to sire the foundation herd of the next decade — we need to pay attention to \$EN and \$W. We don't want to lose ground on one of the breed's core strengths.



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**Table 1: Comparing breed average EPDs for yearling weight using the AB-EPD adjustment value**

<u>Breed</u>	<u>Noncomparable breed avg. EPD</u>	<u>Adj. factor</u>	<u>Comparable breed avg. AB-EPD</u>
Angus	71.5	0.0	71.5
Hereford	63.0	-15.7	47.3
Red Angus	51.0	-0.8	50.2
Limousin	68.2	-21.5	46.7
Simmental	59.5	20.8	80.3
Charolais	35.2	53.1	88.3
Gelbvieh	73.0	-22.6	50.4
Brangus	37.8	21.1	58.9

**Table 2: Comparing breed average EPDs for birth weight using the AB-EPD adjustment value**

<u>Breed</u>	<u>Noncomparable breed avg. EPD</u>	<u>Adj. factor</u>	<u>Comparable breed avg. AB-EPD</u>
Angus	2.3	0.0	2.3
Hereford	3.7	2.9	6.6
Red Angus	0.4	3.0	3.4
Limousin	2.1	4.1	6.2
Simmental	1.8	5.8	7.6
Charolais	1.3	10.0	11.3
Gelbvieh	1.9	4.7	6.6
Brangus	2.0	5.2	7.2