



By the Numbers

► by **Sally Northcutt**, director of genetic research, American Angus Association

Frequently asked questions

As performance data continue to roll in at the Association for a variety of traits, it's always worthwhile to review the commonly asked questions and the basic responses. While this summary is not comprehensive, it hits the highlights on data-submission and expected-progeny-difference (EPD) questions that we hear throughout the year. By knowing a few extra details, your performance data becomes an informative part of characterizing the genetics of your cattle.

What is a contemporary group, and do I need one to have EPDs?

A proper contemporary group is required in order to calculate EPDs that utilize the animal's own performance. The definition of a contemporary group is a set of animals of the same sex, measured or weaned on the same day and managed alike.

Is it better to put bulls and heifers in the same contemporary group or in separate groups?

For ratio purposes, it is recommended to split bulls and heifers into separate contemporary groups. Although it is not required, some breeders choose to group bulls and heifers together. For example, if you have one bull and four heifers in a contemporary group — they will be ratioed together (on a bull basis); however, when EPDs are calculated, the bull will be viewed as a contemporary group of one, and EPDs will not be calculated using the bull's own performance data.

Should I use a tape measure to estimate birth weights? Can I estimate the weight of my calf with a tape?

The American Angus Association requires that a calf be weighed with a scale within 24 hours of birth. Tapes that measure the girth of the calf and hoof tapes are unreliable predictors of birth weights.

When should I take my weaning and yearling weights? When can I ultrasound my calves?

Weaning = 120-280 days of age
adjusts to 205 days of age

Yearling = 320-440 days of age
adjusts to 365 days of age

Ultrasound = 320-440 days of age for bulls
adjusts to 365 days of age
320-460 days of age for heifers
adjusts to 390 days of age

Why doesn't my bull have EPDs?

There are several reasons why your bull may not have EPDs. One of the most common reasons would be because no weight data has been submitted on the bull. If the dam or sire has only interim EPDs, a pedigree-estimated interim will not be calculated for the calf. Another reason might be because the calf is in a contemporary group of one. Also, if the calf is an embryo transfer (ET) calf, out of an unregistered recipient with at least one parent having interim EPDs, no EPDs will be calculated on the calf.

What is an interim? When will the I's go away on my bull's EPDs?

The "I" means interim. If weights have been submitted on your animal and your interim accuracy level is above 0.05, the interim EPD should change to an NCE EPD with the next National Cattle Evaluation (NCE). NCE's are done in December and July. If the animal is an ET, out of an unregistered recipient, the interim notation will remain until the animal has natural progeny weaned and reported in a proper contemporary group and their data is processed through an NCE.

Do I need to turn in yearling weights, or will the Association pick up the scan weights submitted with ultrasound?

Yearling weights must be submitted separately from ultrasound data. We will not automatically pick up the ultrasound scan date and weight as a yearling weight. Yearling weights must be submitted through AAA Login or on Yearling Report forms.

I scanned my heifer, but I still don't have any EPDs. Why is that?

If she was the only heifer scanned out of her weaning contemporary group, then she is considered a contemporary group of one for ultrasound and cannot have EPDs calculated.

Also, check her age at scanning to make sure she was within the age window for ultrasound and make sure that she was not given a separate group or feed code for ultrasound that would cause her to be a contemporary group of one.

I just scanned my bulls last week. Why is one of my bulls in a group by himself, even though the bulls have been in the same contemporary group since weaning?

If one of your bulls is in a contemporary group of one for ultrasound and you had other bulls out of his weaning contemporary group scanned, check the age of the bull and whether he was given a separate group or feed code for ultrasound.

Why doesn't my bull have a Beef Value (\$B)?

\$B is a terminal trait index made up of the Feedlot Value (\$F) and Grid Value (\$G). If your animal doesn't have a \$F and \$G, then a \$B cannot be computed. \$F considers the relationship between the weaning and yearling EPDs, so if one of those EPDs is not present then no \$F will be calculated. \$G considers the carcass EPDs. If the animal is missing carcass EPDs, then a \$G is not calculated.

If I have an ET calf with a registered recipient, can I get EPDs on the calf?

If the ET calf was raised by a registered recipient, that calf is eligible for interim and NCE EPDs with its own data being used in the calculation of its EPDs. Additionally, it must be in a proper contemporary group made up of ET calves also raised by registered recipients.

How do I sign up to submit data online?

If you do not already have an online profile, go to www.angusonline.org/logon.aspx and click on "I'm a new user, sign me up!" Fill out the requested information and you will receive an e-mail with your password. That password will be valid the next business day, and you'll be ready to view and submit data online.

What are the different ways I can submit data?

Data can be submitted through AAA Login, through a downloadable spreadsheet

(found on AAA Login), through the Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) program or on paper forms.

How can I tell if weight data has been submitted on an animal?

In AAA Login, you can view Angus Herd Improvement Record (AHIR®) data on animals through Work History Reports or by clicking on the AHIR Data column in your Registered Herd Inventory.

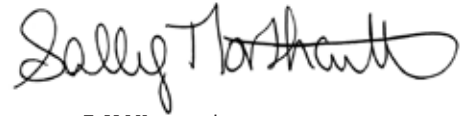
Why didn't my cow make Pathfinder® status?

A cow must meet the following criteria in order to qualify for Pathfinder status:

- ▶ Initially, a cow must have had three calves with an average weaning ratio of 105, and these calves must have been evaluated with at least nine other herdmates.

- ▶ Beginning with her first calf, all calves must have been recorded in AHIR. No irregular weanings or calves by commercial sires are used in this analysis.
- ▶ A weaning weight must have been processed on a calf measured in the last 18 months.
- ▶ A cow must have had her first calf at an age equal to or less than the average age of the herd at first calving, plus 30 days.
- ▶ To qualify for subsequent listings in the report, she must maintain a regular calving interval, which is determined as follows:
Maximum calving interval = 365 days + (30 days per number of calving intervals)
(Refer to www.angus.org/Performance/PathFinder.aspx).

More details on these topics can be studied at www.angus.org or through contacting the Performance Programs Department at 816-383-5100.



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Editor's Note: "By the Numbers" is a column by Association performance programs staff to share insights with Angus members about data collection and interpretation, the National Cattle Evaluation (NCE), genetic selection, and relevant technology and industry issues. If you have questions or would like to suggest a topic for a future column, contact Sally Northcutt, director of genetic research, or Bill Bowman, director of performance programs, at 816-383-5100.