



# Movin' Forward

► by **Bryce Schumann**, CEO, American Angus Association

## A new age

*Angus cattlemen are well-positioned amid growing genomic capabilities and positive market indications.*

### Good times ahead

Ag economists and market analysts, some more cautious than others, say we're poised for prosperous growth of the nation's cow herd.

Our business — so riddled in recent years with drought, escalating feed costs, shrinking pasture availability, you name it — is seemingly, albeit slowly, entering a phase of growth.

Both seedstock and commercial producers who stuck through these difficult times are seeing rewards in the form of increasing prices at auction, improving pasture and range conditions, and lowering corn prices.

Of course, it's not all roses. Real challenges remain, but most of these factors spell opportunity for those with the proper tools — tools to produce the type of beef consumers want.

### Better tools, less risk

Newly recalibrated genomic-enhanced (GE-EPDs) released by the American Angus

Association and its subsidiary Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) in early December represent the industry's most advanced selection tools.

This is the third such calibration of Angus-specific GE-EPDs, derived from the Association's growing database of DNA-tested animals. It's also a technological milestone in the continued evolution of genomic data and GE-EPDs.

As more breeders adopt DNA testing on their operations, we have more information to incorporate into GE-EPDs and improve the accuracy of those performance tools. This empowers both registered and commercial Angus cattlemen, regardless of herd size, to make more rapid herd improvements.

For comparison, when genomic-enhanced EPDs were first introduced, the calibration was trained on about 5,000 animals. This third calibration was derived using nearly 40,000 animals. The result is more-accurate, Angus-specific GE-EPDs for traits of interest.

Take the Heifer Pregnancy (HP) EPD, for

example. The early December NCE release marks the first time HP included genomic data as part of the Association's weekly evaluation.

Now producers can identify genetically superior females earlier in life, with reliable accuracy for even hard-to-measure traits.

Most importantly, more accuracy means less risk. That's a significant advantage in an age where every breeding decision counts.

### Reliability = marketability

Commercial Angus cattlemen are also reaping the rewards of DNA data. A group of Missouri producers recently hosted the first-ever GeneMax Elite Bred Heifer Sale in early December, where more than 300 high-percentage Angus bred heifers sold at auction in Green City, Mo.

The AIded and fetal-sexed heifers were sorted based on their GeneMax test scores — a DNA test for commercial, Angus-sired animals that measures gain and grade potential.

Regional Manager Wes Tiemann reports the heifers sold well, citing increased reliability.

In fact, the event was so successful, organizers are reportedly already planning their next GeneMax-sorted sale.

People like that, and the thousands of Angus breeders submitting DNA data, drive the development of genomic-enhanced selection — and fuel better days ahead.

  
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