

ID Solution

American Angus Association provides cost-effective solution to individual identification.

by **Mathew Elliott**



► Destron Fearing donates 5% of the business it receives through The Tag Store back to the Angus Foundation for support of the Beef Leader's Institute.



For anyone who's tried to read a faded ear tag while sorting cattle or had to use a marker to write a number on a tag while dealing with rain, mud and a protective mama, the American Angus Association now offers a solution — high-quality, custom-printed tags at competitive prices.

Through The Tag Store, producers can build their cattle tags step-by-step and preview a mock-up prior to ordering. And while you can order a sequence of numbers in one tag color, customers are certainly not limited to that.

"Customized options are virtually endless," says Sara Snider, director of AngusSource®. Snider explains that The Tag Store was created in response to inquiries from AngusSource customers who wanted to purchase customized ranch tags.

Discussions led to a partnership with Destron Fearing through which the Association now offers Duflex® visual

identification panel tags, e.Tags®, Combo e.Tags®, ChoiceSets™ and COOLTags™ with a host of customization options and other tag-related products through The Tag Store (available online at www.customcattletags.com).

Ordering is as simple as clicking "Click Here to Order Tags" on the home page, choosing a tag style and clicking "Build Your Tags." The onscreen menu walks you through the process of customizing your tags.

Producers can choose the type of tag, as well as the size and color of the tag. They may include custom-printed text on the front of the tag free of charge. Print on the back of the tag or artwork may be added for a small fee.

"Custom-printed tags are ideal for production sales as well as identification purposes," Snider says. Available since January 2010, Angus producers are increasingly taking advantage of this new service.

Says Snider, "It's been crazy busy since word has gotten out. People are seeing the options available and realizing how competitively priced the tags are."



► Cattlemen can custom-order laser-printed tags through The Tag Store offered on the American Angus Association's website, www.angus.org.

In the sale ring

Jarvene Shackelford, an auctioneer with American Livestock Brokers in Ripley, Miss., has been using the tags for sales since he first found them online while viewing sale listings at www.angus.org.

"We had been ordering tags from other companies, but when I found these, we switched," he says. "We are in the Angus business, we work for those in the Angus breed, and we are going to support those who support us."

Shackelford custom-orders tags for the sales that he auctions, and they've been noticed.

"People like them and ask us to help order them for their operations," Shackelford says. Tag quality has been good, and the shipping fast, he adds.

"I do use the tags for sales, but if I were buying tags as a producer, I know I would use them there, too," he adds. "They are extremely competitive in price, and it supports your organization."

After learning of the service from Association press releases and checking out The Tag Store online, Josh Worthington has been ordering tags through The Tag Store to identify his own cattle and consignments in the Missouri Angus Futurity, as well as other commercial and production sales.

"I can't speak for everyone, but I'm a big fan of these tags," says Worthington, general manager of the Missouri Angus Association. "Everything I need is right on the website. You just upload your file, approve a proof, and the tags will be on their way in the mail."

When Worthington talks about uploading a file, he is talking about the management numbers he has printed on his tags, Snider explains. Producers have the option to order their tags blank or with sequential or custom tag numbering. Those wanting custom tag numbering can upload a file that includes the management numbers they would like printed on the tags. This option allows them to order tags numbered 1, 4, 7, 18, 96 and 101A, for example, without having to build them one at a time. Additional text and logos can be added online prior to completing the order.

Making the switch to ordering from The Tag Store was not a difficult decision, since simplicity, price and style were comparable and, in most cases, better, Worthington says. Another huge advantage, he says, is the timing.

"We get these tags about two weeks faster than we were getting them. We have gotten some in as fast as four days, but it averages about five business days. The price is competitive with everyone," says

Ordering your tags

Choosing from among customization options could be more difficult than actually ordering tags. Customers can simply go to www.angus.org and find "The Tag Store" link on the left side of the page, or go to www.customcattletags.com.

From there, producers can start building their tags. There are many different tag options. Producers choose a tag type and then custom-build their tags by choosing the desired color and adding management numbers, text and artwork. Step-by-step instructions are available online. Customers view a mock-up of their tag prior to adding the order to the online shopping cart and checking out. Staff are available via phone to assist producers with questions.

Once an order is received, the tags are manufactured within three to five business days and shipped directly to the customer via UPS ground to ensure a quick turnaround on all orders.

Worthington. "We can add the sale name, which we don't have to do, but it's nice and it doesn't cost us any more. It looks really good, and it costs just the same as ordering non-customized tags from other companies."

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In the field

Matt Mitchell of Taylor Cattle Farm in Crestwood, Ky., has been very pleased with the tags he has ordered.

"I found out about the tags as part of the e-mail Angus e-List blasts that we get," Mitchell says. "From there I simply went to the Association website and found the link down in the lower left corner."

Mitchell did some research and liked what he found with the Association's tag store.

"After looking around at some other options, I decided that these were the most cost-effective," Mitchell says. "Cost-wise, these laser-printed tags were actually less than the plain tags that we would have to write on, and those tend to fade over time. Plus, I already do a lot of work with the Association, and I like working with them."

Sending spreadsheets has gotten easier for Mitchell after doing it frequently. In May 2010, Taylor Cattle Farm dispersed most of its 1,000-head cow herd.

"With the economy the way it was, we decided to do some rebuilding and change up our business practices a little. We have gotten away from some of the really expensive cows and pregnancies we were working with. We've always had really good cows, but now we are starting over with some more good, economical and efficient mama cows."

From August to December Mitchell has submitted four spreadsheets to the American Angus Association to have custom tags printed for his cattle. By providing the information in a spreadsheet, Mitchell was

able to have the sire and dam printed on each tag, along with the animal management number, ranch name and logo.

"At this time producers wishing to print different text on each tag must place their

orders by sending a spreadsheet to our office," Snider explains. "Our Information Systems Department is working on programming that will allow producers to upload that information and place those orders online. We expect it to be available soon."

While rebuilding his herd, Mitchell has found it more convenient to purchase tags for individual sets of cattle as he buys them.

"It would be a lot easier, and we wouldn't get charged with re-setting our logo every time, if I could send in for 300 tags or so," Mitchell recognizes. "But, that's not how it's going to work right now and that's OK."

There is a \$10 fee to digitize artwork, Snider explains. This is a one-time fee if multiple sets of tags are ordered at once, but the artwork is not stored. It must be re-digitized for tags ordered at a later date.

Getting the tags customized to his liking took a little time and effort, but Mitchell is very pleased with the results.

"I really like how we have our tags set up," says Mitchell. "We have Taylor Cattle Farm written across the top, then the sire

name under that. Then we have the management number that's nice and big, with the dam's name on the bottom. On the back we have our logo as big as they will let us, and under that we have the number again.

"We have a left-handed chute, so it was really handy when we were back working on an animal to see what number it was without having to walk all the way around to the front," he continues. The number

on the back can also be a huge help when sorting cattle in the lot.

"Most of our cattle are pretty calm and will walk calmly through when we are sorting," Mitchell says. "But sometimes some will get in the back facing the wrong way, and it's a big help to see which one we want out of there."

Taylor Farms currently uses the tags for its entire herd and anticipates putting them into all of their sale bulls this spring.

"These tags will help our bull buyers who don't mess with their bulls that much," Mitchell says. "Some of them don't run them through the chute or work them that much; this will be a good way for them to ID those bulls."

That custom ranch tag is what the Association was looking to provide its membership when they started The Tag Store. The one-stop shop for producers' tagging needs is open online 24/7 for beef cattle producers. For any tag-related questions, call the Association at 816-383-5100 or tagstore@angus.org.

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