

AHIR[®] Inquiries

Association staff
answer common questions regarding
Angus Herd Improvement Records.

by American Angus Association staff

Due to the large amount of information available, interest in performance programs has increased steadily during the last several years. Qualified technicians are available in the Beef Improvement Records (BIR) department to answer diverse questions on topics ranging from weight data to expected progeny differences (EPDs), breeding data to ultrasound and web support. Technicians are available via phone, fax or e-mail.

Information on BIR programs can be found online at www.angus.org, in the *Angus Journal's* monthly "By the Numbers" column, through regional managers, Outreach Seminars, and Boot Camps. With the varied levels of knowledge regarding EPDs, breeders have become an underlying source of information to teach performance concepts to other breeders.

The following represents questions commonly posed by breeders regarding the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR[®]) program.

Q: What is an interim?

Interim EPDs are calculated on animals during the time period between the American Angus Association's National Cattle Evaluations (NCEs), which occur twice each year, once in July and again in December.

An interim value is indicated by an "I" in front of the number. While admittedly low in accuracy, an interim value gives you a snapshot of the animal's value as a parent.

Thus, it provides a temporary selection-decision tool until the next NCE run in which enough information is available to calculate an NCE EPD.

To be included in the twice-a-year NCE, a nonparent animal must have a performance record that meets data requirements and is part of a valid contemporary group. Weights must be submitted prior to the published cutoff date for an NCE run, so submit weights as soon as possible.

Q: Why doesn't my animal have EPDs?

There are several reasons your animal may not have EPDs. One of the most common reasons is no weight data has been submitted on the animal. If the dam or sire has interim EPDs, a pedigree estimate will not be calculated for the calf.

Another reason your animal may not have EPDs might be because the calf is in a contemporary group of one (see following question, "What is a contemporary group, and do I need one to have EPDs?").

Also, if the calf is an embryo transfer (ET) calf born to an unregistered recipient, with at least one parent having interim EPDs, no EPDs will be calculated on the calf.

Q: When will the I's go away on my animal'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 NCE run (July or December).

If the animal is an ET calf born to 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.

Remember, interim EPDs have low accuracies, and lower-accuracy EPDs are expected to change as more information becomes available on the genetic merit of the animal in question.

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

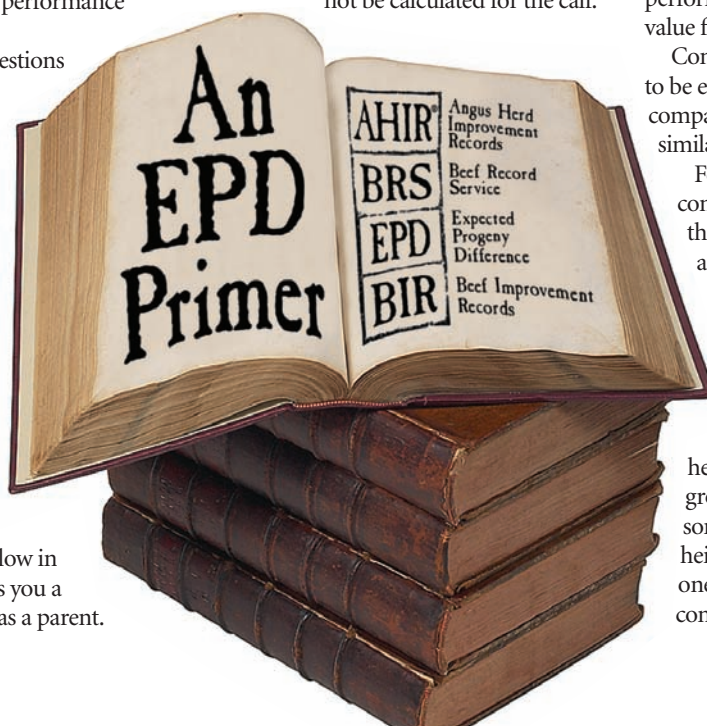
A proper contemporary group is required in order to calculate NCE EPDs, which utilize the animal's own performance. The definition of a contemporary group is a set of animals of the same sex (minimum of two), weaned on the same day and managed alike. If the calf of interest has no contemporaries to which to compare performance, its individual record has no value for EPDs.

Contemporary grouping allows animals to be evaluated on how well they performed compared with herdmates raised under similar environmental conditions.

For more information regarding contemporary grouping, refer to the "By the Numbers" columns in the May 2005 and February 2007 *Angus Journal*.

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

For ratio purposes, it is recommended to split bulls and heifers into separate contemporary groups; however, it is not required, and 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). In this case, 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.

Q: 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

Q: 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. Research conducted at South Dakota State University has shown tapes that measure the girth of the calf and/or hoof tapes are unreliable predictors of birth weights. For more information on this study go to: <http://ars.sdstate.edu/BeefExt/BeefReports/1995/95-16.htm>.

Q: 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 using its own performance data. The calf must be in a proper contemporary group made up of other ET calves also raised by registered recipients. Refer to the "By the Numbers" column in the May 2006 *Angus Journal*.

Q: Do I have to turn in my yearling weights separately or will the ultrasound scan weight be submitted automatically as yearling weights?

Yearling weights must be submitted separately from ultrasound scan weights. The association does not automatically pick up the ultrasound scan date and weight as a yearling weight. Yearling weights must be submitted on printed Yearling Report forms provided by the Association or electronically through AAA Login or Angus Information Management Software (AIMS).

Q: Can I turn in scrotal and height measurements at a later date than yearling measurements?

Breeders have the option to enter scrotal measurements taken at a different date than

when yearling measurements were taken. If submitting the data online, there is a separate field found under "Submit AHIR/BRS Scrotal Data." If submitting on paper forms, please contact the BIR department.

Height measurements taken at a different date can only be added through the BIR department if they are taken within (\pm) two weeks of when yearling weights were collected.

Q: Why doesn't my bull have a \$B value?

The beef value index (\$B) is a terminal trait index made up of the feedlot (\$F) and grid (\$G) values to improve postweaning performance and carcass trait merit. If your animal doesn't have a \$F or a \$G, then a \$B cannot be computed.

\$F considers the relationship between weaning and yearling weight EPDs. If one of those EPDs is not present, then no \$F will be calculated.

\$G considers ultrasound and/or carcass EPDs. If the animal is missing both ultrasound and carcass EPDs, a \$G can't be calculated.

Also, remember \$B is not simply the sum of \$F and \$G. The \$B calculations include additional adjustments.

Visit www.angus.org/sireeval/valueindex.html for more information.

Q: I just scanned my bulls last week. Why is one of my bulls in a group by itself? They've 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 at the same time, check the age of the bull to see if he was outside of the age requirement for scanning or if he was given a separate group or feed code for ultrasound.

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

Q: How do I sign up to submit data online?

If you do not already have an online profile, go to www.angusonline.org and click on "I'm a new user, sign me up!" Fill out the requested information. 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. Visit the online Angus Education Center, available at www.angus.org/anguseducation.html, for more information on online tools. Click on the AAA Login webcast for a complete presentation.

Q: What are the different ways I can submit data?

Data can be submitted through AAA Login (www.angusonline.org), through a downloadable spreadsheet (found on AAA Login), through the AIMS program or on paper forms.

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

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

Q: I'm having trouble getting the weights on this calf submitted online ... and, yes, it's an ET calf. What can I do?

A common mistake breeders make while submitting data online is they don't realize there is a separate field used for ET and foster calves. When submitting data online at www.angusonline.org, AHIR/BRS Submit ET/Foster Weaning Data is found just below AHIR/BRS Calving and Weaning Data. The ET/Foster Weaning section has a field that will allow you to report recipient or foster dam information.

Q: Why didn't my cow make Pathfinder®?

The Pathfinder program began in 1978 in an effort to identify superior cows based upon AHIR records, with emphasis on early puberty, breeding and early calving, regularity of calving and above-average performance of offspring. 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.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 70

AHIR Inquiries CONTINUED FROM PAGE 69

- ▶ 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: $365 \text{ days} + (30 \text{ days}/\text{number of calving intervals}) = \text{maximum calving interval}$.

To continue to qualify each consecutive year, the cow must produce regularly and wean a calf that helps maintain the average weaning ratio of 105 or above. Once a cow is designated a Pathfinder, she is always a

Pathfinder, even though she may not qualify for the listing each year.

If you have questions about any of the performance programs available through the American Angus Association, call 816-383-5100 and request the BIR department, or visit the performance programs home page online at www.angus.org/performance/index.html.

