

# DNA as Risk Insurance

Adding DNA samples to management routine can serve as insurance later.

by *Kasey Miller*, associate editor

**E**ven with careful records and management, mistakes can be made or circumstances out of our control take effect.

There are many scenarios: Parentage and genetic-defect questions arise, but the sire or dam gets hurt or dies prematurely without any DNA stored. Calves are switched late at night in the barn during a rough night calving. Records are lost in floods or fires. Records can't be found or can't be interpreted.

A neighbor's bull gets out in your pasture, and you don't know which calves are sired by him. Plus, the new trend is multiple-sire pastures. If parentage questions come up — say some calves show up with abnormalities — what do you do then?

Don Laughlin, director of member services at the American Angus Association, says that taking a blood sample on an FTA card to obtain DNA markers can serve as affordable risk insurance against these scenarios.

FTA cards are \$1.75, and samples can be taken by a veterinarian or producers themselves. Taking samples can easily be inserted into the normal production routine when working cattle, Laughlin points out, especially when getting ready for a bull sale or performing fertility or bull soundness exams.

With the higher price of bulls now, customers expect more, and having DNA on file makes solving potential issues simpler and less dramatic. If abnormal calves result, a DNA test can pinpoint the issues or who the sire may be.

In the multiple-sire pasture scenario, calves must be DNA-marker typed to be eligible to register, says Laughlin, so it is a good idea to get samples on all bulls.

"It is prudent for every registered breeder to parent-verify and get DNA markers on all of their bulls," he says. That's especially true if a bull will not parentally qualify to his parents, then his pedigree is temporarily

suspended. This also affects the bull's progeny as they cannot be registered.

If cost is an issue for performing DNA tests, he says samples should last for at least 25 years, so it is better to have the sample and store it if needed. When working with your cattle, he recommends taking a blood sample on an FTA card (preferred over hair samples because FTA cards can be archived and used in more testing). Then you can let it dry, put it in storage and keep it for peace of mind.

DNA tests are required for semen on non-owned bulls and for cows flushed for embryo transfer.

You can order the cards online through the Angus Store at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org), on AAA Login or by calling the office.

For more information on collecting blood samples, you can view a how-to video at [www.angus.org/agi/videos/videos.aspx?vid=HowToDnaSampleCattle](http://www.angus.org/agi/videos/videos.aspx?vid=HowToDnaSampleCattle), or read more at [www.angus.org/AGI/DNASamplesBrochure.pdf](http://www.angus.org/AGI/DNASamplesBrochure.pdf). 