

Angus Assn. releases bull breeding value statistics

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. — A comprehensive report on the breeding value of 564 registered Angus bulls was released recently by the American Angus Association and is available to the general public, reports C.K. Allen, executive vice-president of the American Angus Association.

The "Field Data Sire Evaluation Report" is the first of its kind ever produced by a long established beef breed organized, Allen said.

The 60-page bound report shows a dramatic variation in the ability of individual Angus bulls to sire calves with superior weaning and yearling weights. The expected progeny differences for yearling weight range from a minus 35 pounds to a plus 60 pounds, according to Dick Spader, director of breed improvement for the American Angus Association.

"This means," he said, "that a breeder who uses the minus bull could expect the yearling weights of his calves to be reduced by as much as 35 pounds per animal. On the other hand, a breeder who uses the top ranking bull would find that the calves from this sire would average up to 60 pounds heavier than calves from other sires in the report."

The potential yearling weight difference in the calves from these two bulls would be 95 pounds. Based upon \$70 per cwt cattle prices, that would mean a \$66.50 per head difference in the value of yearling offspring from the two bulls.

"Obviously this report can have a major economic impact on the Angus breed and upon the commercial

cattlemen who use Angus bulls in their programs," Spader pointed out. "Cattlemen who use this report to help them select breeding stock to improve specific economic traits in their herds should be able to increase the productivity of their cattle."

The new Field Data Sire Evaluation Report, available for \$5 from the Association, is based upon the more than 1.5 million birth, weaning, and yearling weight records on permanent file in the Association's Angus Herd Improvement Records program. Breeders have no choice of whether their bull is listed in the report. All Angus bulls with sufficient qualified progeny are evaluated and listed.

The report on each individual bull shows the expected progeny difference for birth weight, when available, and for weaning weight and yearling weight. These are expressed in plus or minus pounds to make it easy to evaluate individual bulls, and compare different bulls.

In addition, a maternal breeding value is also calculated for each bull. It is expressed as an estimated breeding value of how daughters of a bull will milk.

This ratio is also accompanied by an accuracy figure to show cattlemen how accurate the ratio is. In general the more of a bull's progeny that were used to compute the ratio, the higher the accuracy figure.

Richard Willham, Iowa State University, who along with an associate P.J. Berger analyzed the AHIR data for the 1980 Field Data Report, points out that Angus breeders have made

outstanding progress since 1965 when they first began keeping AHIR records in significant numbers.

"The average Angus sire born in 1978 was genetically 34 pounds heavier in yearling weight than the average Angus sire born in 1965," he said. "The genetic trend of 2.6 pounds per year in the Angus breed represents the response of Angus breeders to the beef industry's desire, first expressed in the middle 1960's, to have Angus breeding stock with more growth potential. This evaluation of a genetic trend is the first reported for a breed of beef cattle."

"The genetic trend for the Angus breed for pre-weaning growth (weaning weight) is plus 11 pounds from 1965 to 1978," Willham said. "This is an important change, although not as spectacular as the yearling weight change."

Some 214,000 yearling weights on file in the AHIR program were analyzed to produce the yearling figures, Willham said. The statistical procedure used was developed for dairy sire evaluation at Cornell University.

The Field Data report represents a "milestone" in the use of performance records for accurate selection of sires, said Willham.

"Until now only the newly introduced breeds have had sire evaluation programs that used existing performance data. This was possible because the breed were introduced by using sires by artificial insemination."

The Association report was made possible by two factors — the open artificial

insemination rule adopted by the Association board of directors in 1972 combined with the subsequent widespread use of A.I. throughout the breed, and the dramatic increase in recent years of the use of the AHIR program by Angus breeders.

Another factor that contributed to the success of the field data report were the 250 Angus bulls evaluated in the designed Sire Evaluation program started in 1974. Some of the sires used in the designed program, and later used widely in the breed through artificial insemination

performance data together and made it possible to compare sires in all parts of the country and under various management conditions. Only Angus bulls that had sufficient numbers of AHIR progeny tied to reference sires were included in the field data report.

One surprise that came from the report is that, despite an increase in yearling weights, there has been a slight decrease in overall average birth weights in the Angus breed since 1965. The decrease has averaged a minus .2 pound per year.

Several factors could influence this trend, according to Willham, but he said that "...does suggest that...Angus breeders are considering calving ease in their sires."

The Field Data Sire Evaluation Report represents a shift from purely subjective evaluation to more objective means of evaluating the value of a breeding animal.

"The American Angus Association has provided its breeders with the most current set of performance programs in the breeding stock industry," Willham concluded.

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