



# 2006 National Angus Conference & Tour



## Tools for Beef Cattle Improvement

by **Shauna Rose Hermel**



If you turn in a cow weight without a body condition score, that weight can't be used in establishing a mature weight EPD, explained Sally Northcutt, director of genetic research for the American Angus Association. Northcutt provided a laundry list of tips to assist producers in collecting, reporting and utilizing AHIR<sup>SM</sup> records and genetic predictions.

BOISE, IDAHO (Sept. 26, 2006) — The way we have collected and analyzed data to assist in beef improvement has transitioned over time, Sally Northcutt, American Angus Association director of genetic research, told attendees of the “Back to Basics” seminar that preceded the 2006 National Angus Conference in Boise.

Producers have moved from looking at average daily gains and within herd ratios to using expected progeny differences (EPDs) to rank animals for their relative genetic merit, Northcutt explained. The last few years have seen a transition to bio-economic dollar value indexes (\$Values) — attaching a dollar sign to those genetic differences.

Northcutt presented a snapshot of the tools available through the Association and provided answers to most-often-asked questions about performance evaluation.

Subjects included:

- types of information to submit at various stages in the life of an Angus calf;
- information provided through Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR<sup>SM</sup>);
- adjusted weights vs. ratios vs. EPDs;
- forming proper contemporary groups;
- online decision-making tools;
- EPD formulas;

- trait heritabilities;
- calving ease direct (CED) and calving ease maternal (CEM) EPDs;
- interim EPDs and the process by which EPDs are established;
- dollar value indexes (\$Values); and
- online resources available to assist producers.

“The beauty of all this is we end up with very, very helpful, reasonable expected progeny differences and dollar values that can be used by your commercial customers to make directional change,” Northcutt said.

With 15 million pedigrees and 14 million measurements, Angus members have compiled an impressive database through the American Angus Association. But there's still more useful data to be added.

Northcutt said the Association is requesting producers submit more reproductive information, including breeding records, disposal codes, pregnancy check results and calving data.

To listen to the audio of Northcutt's presentation and/or view the accompanying PowerPoint, visit the newsroom at.

