

# Notes from the American Angus Association Board

Submitted by Joe Hampton, AAA Board Member

One of the enjoyable aspects of serving on the Board is being able to attend Angus Field Days in other states. In early June I was invited to speak to the Alabama Angus Field Day in Opelika. One of the first individuals I saw when I arrived at the Field Day site was Banks Herndon the speaker at our annual meeting last January. Banks remembered his experiences in Winston warmly, and asked that I say hello to folks for him. The tradition in Alabama is to combine the Field Day with their Junior Heifer Show, auction the pages in their handbook and then announce all of their year-end awards. The result of combining these activities is a large crowd with a lot of excitement during the day. It was a pleasure to visit with breeders from another state and hear their concerns about the Angus industry. Making the trip even more enjoyable was the fact that my long time friends Joe French and Bill Teague accompanied me on the trip to Alabama.

Also in early June, the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) celebrated the forty year anniversary of its founding at its meeting in Fort Collins, Colorado. While the meetings are full of interesting and informative speakers, it is the conversations that occur in the hallways and during the breaks that are the most insightful. The breed changing tools we have today would not exist without BIF. Performance programs, EPD's, and ultrasound carcass evaluation all were standardized through BIF. The American Angus Association has always been a significant part of the leadership of BIF. Visiting with Dr. Roger McGraw, Head of the Animal Science Department at NC State University reinforced what a unique meeting this is. This is a forum where the leaders of the research community interact with the Breed Associations and progressive performance breeders of all breeds.

One cannot attend a BIF meeting without increasing your understanding of cattle production. While the primary emphasis of this BIF meeting was feed efficiency, I believe the truly breed changing presentation had to do with genetic (genome) evaluation. Dr. Jerry Taylor, University of Missouri, made a presentation about whole genome selection. This theory will allow us to evaluate the genetic differences between animals by evaluating the sites where genetic differences occur in the DNA sequences. These sites are identified as Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs). Since 99% of the genetic material is the same among all cattle, these SNPs account for the genetic variation between animals. There are a finite number of the SNPs and they are located at very predictable locations in the DNA structure. While I do not understand this process, I can appreciate that this approach will raise the level of predictability for our cattle. These are exciting times.

Later in June, Robin and I attended the Board of Directors meeting. Meetings of Angus Productions Inc., Angus Foundation, and Certified Angus Beef LLC as well as all of the standing committees preceded the board meeting. While detailed minutes are available on the Angus.org home page, I will share a few of the highlights. The Angus Foundation will award over \$100,000 in scholarships to our junior members. (It was my pleasure to serve as one of the judges for these scholarships and I was impressed with quality of applications we evaluated.) The Breed Improvement Committee advanced three items; publication of research EPD's for heifer pregnancy, the development of docility EPD, and the combining of carcass EPD's and ultrasound EPD's into one set of EPD's. Also the Board gave instructions for the forming of a subsidiary to develop the next generation of performance evaluation. This company will incorporate our present National Cattle Evaluation with a multiple breed approach while adding the philosophy of whole genome selection.

Robin and I attended the National Junior Angus Show in Tulsa. Over two thousand youth and 1251 head of Angus cattle participated in this event. We were impressed by the abilities and attitudes of these young leaders. Our own Emily Tennant was very prominent as she served as our Miss American Angus. For the past two years I have served as a judge for a division of the Public Speaking Contest and this year Robin judged the Scrapbook Contest. We tried to observe as many of the other contest as possible. Showing cattle is only a part of the National Junior Angus Show. As a breed we should be proud of this character-building event.

Later this summer I will attend the National Angus Conference and Tour in Illinois, the September board meeting at St. Joe and the Certified Angus Beef Conference in Georgia. It has been a very busy summer. We are living in dynamic times and are involved in a dynamic industry. The technologies that are evolving will change the beef industry. If I can help you, please let me know.