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Red Angus and Simmental share resources for joint EPDs

Multi-breed genetic evaluation will increase reliability of growth and carcass trait EPDs

Future National Cattle Evaluations will break new ground for the Red Angus Association of America (RAAA) and American Simmental Association (ASA) as the two breeds combine resources for multi-breed genetic evaluation (MBGE) of their growth and carcass trait EPDs. Both breed associations share the belief that their competitive position is enhanced through this cooperation.

Initially, growth and carcass EPDs will be calculated on the ASA/RAAA pooled dataset, utilizing the ASA MBGE model, while reproduction predictions will be produced on single breed models. Both breeds will maintain their relationship with Colorado State University (CSU) with Red Angus receiving Calving Ease, Heifer Pregnancy, Stayability and Maintenance Energy EPDs, and Simmental receiving Stayability EPDs.

Impact on the Industry

The first tangible impact of this relationship is that each breed will see an increase in relevant data. Kelli Brown, R.A. Brown Ranch of Throckmorton, Texas, and current RAAA President, envisions that the two-breed collaboration will have a powerful impact on the industry. "Simmental and Red Angus stakeholders immediately gain EPD accuracy and more relevant genetic selection tools as the two breeds' databases combine to total nearly nine million animals with over one million in common," said Brown. "Of course, the ultimate winners will be the ranchers, cattle feeders and branded-beef customers of these more reliable, more meaningfully described Red Angus and Simmental genetics."

The MBGE model will provide a more relevant description of all animals in the database by taking into account the performance due to heterosis. Of equal importance, the MBGE model accounts for the "other breed" component when Red Angus or Simmental breeders use other breeds to build hybrid seedstock. These attributes of the MBGE will deliver increased accuracy and faster proof of sires, whether breeders utilize them to make straight-bred Simmental or Red Angus, or hybrid seedstock.

"With the dramatic increase in the use of crossbred seedstock in the beef industry, melding the Red Angus and Simmental databases and leveraging the predictive power of ASA's multi-breed genetic evaluation system makes good sense," said Dick Quaas, PhD, retired professor of animal breeding, Cornell University, and founder of multi-breed evaluations.

A natural evolution

In addition to the obvious biological complement ranchers enjoy from Red Angus-Simmental crosses, the breeds share many common philosophies regarding genetic evaluation with both breeds gaining commercial market share through innovation.

Each has focused on providing selection tools for Economic Relevant Traits (ERT); ASA provides concise and meaningful predictions for the feed yard profit drivers – Yield Grade, Quality Grade and Carcass Weight. RAAA's initial focus was in cowherd building traits such as Stayability, Heifer Pregnancy and Maintenance Energy Requirement.

While Simmental was a forerunner to the rest of the industry in multi-breed genetic evaluation (MBGE) by more than a decade, Red Angus was adopting Total Herd Reporting (THR) as the best way to ensure EPD accuracy through complete contemporary group reporting. Moving forward, these innovations will serve as cornerstones of the combined ASA-RAAA genetic evaluation.

"We are looking forward to working with Red Angus in developing better beef for the industry through the enhancements that MBGE will bring. Our members and customers deserve the advantages of this partnership between the RAAA and ASA," said Gregg Bailey, ASA board chairman. "Joint projects between breed associations should become more prevalent as the beef industry continues to evolve and we are striving to be prepared to meet that future demand."

By working together, both breeds are better positioned to evaluate emerging technologies, ultimately siphoning off the best science to advance EPDs. Such enhancements will be guided by a joint Technical Advancement Committee (TAC), which will prioritize projects and make budget requests to the respective breeds. The Simmental and Red Angus breeds will share equally in funding such Research and Development as well as populating the TAC with an appropriate mix of industry, academic and leadership from the respective breeds.

Willie Altenburg, Beef Marketing Manager, Genex, summarized the collaboration between the two breeds. *"The joint effort by the Red Angus and Simmental Associations can be as powerful to the industry as crossbreeding and hybrid vigor. It can add 25 percent to the productivity of all who utilize genetics from these two breeds!"*

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