

## Advance and Maintain Top Level Services

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To properly evaluate what we must do to maintain top level services in the event of a relocation we must first identify and explain all services ASA currently provides. In addition we need to comment on our short and long term outlook and attempt to foresee what ASA will look like in the future.

### 1) Data processing

Data may be submitted to ASA either electronically or on paper forms provided by ASA at an applicant's request. Applicants are encouraged to submit their data electronically, however, we continue to receive a number on paper at an additional charge.

- a. *Registrations* – Our core and most basic function is to register cattle and maintain our Herd book. Currently this would include maintaining the parentage on approximately 2.5 million head of both domestic and foreign Simgenetic cattle, percentage, purebred, fullblood and Simbrah. Parameters are established for the various classifications and set forth in the rules and by-laws of ASA. The information submitted by members or non-member applicants is assumed to be true and correct. It should be noted that individuals now have the option of receiving a paper registration certificate or simply maintaining electronic storage at ASA.
- b. *Transfers* – Transfers are simply the conveyance of a registration certificate from one person or entity to another and like registration certificate can be done either electronically or on paper.
- c. *THE or Total herd enrollment* – THE has been in existence for approximately ten years and is simply a means of collecting data on every enrolled cow every year. The driving force behind establishing THE was not only to help us build more accurate and complete EPD's (process records on all cattle), but to build a cow stayability EPD as well. ASA is the only breed association as far as we know that allows members three different options for data submission and registration, which undoubtedly has made our system more labor intensive.
  - i. *TR or Total Reporting option* – means you must report the reproductive status on every enrolled cow, every year. You must report/register a calf or report why the cow failed to wean a calf without exception. Under TR, you pay a set fee/cow and can (are encouraged) register every calf without additional charge.
  - ii. *SR or Selection Reporting* – is free. The reporting requirements however are the same as TR (reproductive status on every cow, every year). Under this program you pay a higher fee but only on those animals you choose to register.
  - iii. *NC or No Charge* – allows members to continue to register under the traditional system by simply submitting the required information on the animals they desire to register. The fees under this program are the highest of the three options as it is the Board's position to encourage members to move to THE

- d. Parental Verification* – ASA provides the vehicle that allows members to obtain parental validation and thereby comply with ASA rules and by-laws governing registration of these cattle (frozen embryos). In addition there may be other instances where parental verification is required as in the cases of sires used for AI, donor dams in some cases to qualify for a specific sale. Concurrently ASA has a full time employee dedicated primarily to parental validation issues and charges a higher fee than some other breed associations to offset that cost.

## **2) Genetic evaluation**

ASA was the first beef breed association to offer/require genetic evaluation. In the early 1970's the Board and Staff worked with pioneers in this field to collect and process the required data (birth date, weaning weight and date, etc.) utilizing computers at Boeing. This enabled ASA to develop the first estimated breeding values (EBV) for beef cattle.

Working with Dr. Pollack and Dr. Quaas at Cornell University in New York, ASA then developed and expanded the system to measure traits such as calving ease, milk and carcass, in addition to the weight traits. The third major step that ASA and Cornell then developed was Multi Breed International Cattle Evaluation (MBICE) whereby ASA is able to calculate EPD's on most traits using multiple breed combinations. ASA employs Dr. Wade Shafer, one of the leading experts in the field, to direct this ever evolving facet of our services. Dr. Shafer works hand-in-hand with 30+ year employee Steve McGuire which, along with a full time computer programmer, keeps our genetic evaluations completely in house. We currently provide genetic evaluations for smaller beef breeds as well. It is clear that our genetic evaluation is the finest in the industry and with our multi-breed capability we are positioned well to market these services to other beef breed associations as well.

Two other points should be made clear. First, Dr. Pollack heads a consortium of universities whose aim is to provide leadership in the area of research to enhance and advance beef cattle genetic evaluations to the industry as a whole. Dr. Pollack has stated publicly that he feels that research is the role of this consortium, and that breed associations or another entity should provide the data processing to the industry. Second, there seems to be little doubt that there is one breed association, American Angus (AAA), which has the resources, both physical and financial to offer genetic evaluation (perhaps including multi-breed) services to the industry on their own. We believe it is also safe to say they are positioning themselves, perhaps when the political climate is right (mandatory ID) to house the entire US, and perhaps an even larger, data base. Looking to the future we must either position ourselves to compete with this or be willing to be absorbed by it. In short, the ability to offer data-basing and superior genetic evaluation could well become the key element whether any breed association survives. With proper foresight and planning, next to AAA, ASA in the best position to survive and grow if we can maintain an open-minded, forward thinking philosophy. The only physical restriction would be to ensure we have sufficient and reliable internet service to run a massive database.

There remains no doubt that ASA would lose most if not all the current processing staff including senior IT personnel of a move outside the immediate Bozeman area occurred. This undoubtedly would be a major obstacle to maintaining data processing services in the near term and would require a very experienced, motivated individual to remedy.

## **3) Carcass Merit/ Calving Ease (CMCE) Projects**

ASA Carcass Merit/Calving ease (CMCE) projects were begun nearly ten years ago under the direction of Dr. Lipsey and at the time, new employee, Marty Ropp. The first carcass merit project was undertaken in Missouri where one of Dr. Lipsey's former students managed a 7000 head commercial operation. From that point, these projects have grown to encompass several states and multiple cooperation herds. In addition, the testing of potential calving ease sires was added several years ago, to not only improve, but focus our attention on this critical trait. Utilizing teams of students from Montana State University along with ASA interns, we have compiled an impressive set of data, matching potential CE sires with known Simmental, Angus and Red Angus reference sires to measure CE, growth and carcass traits.

In 2006, ASA was able to seize an opportunity to feed over 400 steers per year in the newly constructed University of Illinois facility located in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. The data gleaned from this project has not only measured average daily gain and carcass value but feed efficiency as well using the computerized Grow Safe System. To date, ASA has obtained over 1300 records that come exclusively from our Montana cooperator herds. It should be noted that the ASA board continues to subsidize the transportation cost of these steers from Montana to Illinois each year, obviously these costs continue to escalate at a rapid pace.

While we do not wish to minimize the importance of the critical relationships built with our Montana Carcass Merit cooperators or Montana State University, we feel it would be fair to conclude that ASA has demonstrated the ability to maintain a long distance, positive relationship with universities and carcass merit herds. In the event of a relocation of ASA headquarters to the Midwest it would be extremely crucial for ASA senior and field staff to cultivate these relationships and realistically some could possibly suffer while others would likely be enhanced.

#### **4) Market creation for members and member's customer products**

One of ASA's key missions is and must remain market creation and growth for our members and member's customers. The Sim-choice and 70/70 programs we are undertaking should only be impacted if field staff were distracted from their duties as a result of a move. Since these individuals' personal lives should not be disrupted given their remote locations, the only impact could come from their need for support staff from ASA headquarters.

#### **5) Provide leadership to AJSA**

AJSA activities require both senior staff and data processing support staff, depending on the time of year and activities being supported. Currently Executive Assistant Paulette Cochenour mentors and coordinates AJSA activities. Many of these specific AJSA activities will be assumed by Youth and Special Events Coordinator, Lacey Robinson, though realistically Paulette will need to work with Lacey for a year or two and will undoubtedly be looked to for support and advice in the long term. In addition, Dr. Lipsey and field staff fulfill critical support roles as do various senior board members.

While Ms. Robinson and field staff may be allowed to and be willing to fulfill their duties from a remote location, it is unlikely that would be the case with either Dr. Lipsey or Paulette Cochenour. As stated earlier no data processors would be willing to relocate, creating the need to train a completely new staff to process regional and national Classic events.

#### **6) Interaction with State Associations & the Membership**

Many of the functions now performed for State associations would be similar or require similar personnel to AJSA events with the exception of the Information Specialist position that has

become a spring board to a higher position within the organizational structure and the Mailroom Position that has been occupied by long time employee, Nancy Chesterfield. Since the Information Specialist has typically been filled by a new college graduate with an eye on the future, it would be difficult to say if that individual would move out of the area, Ms. Chesterfield, however, definitely would not.

The duties of the field staff, including Youth and Special Events Coordinator, Lacey Robinson include attending various state association sponsored meeting and sales as well as ranch sales and field days. When possible, other staff members and Trustees also attend these events to advance the programs and mission of the organization and to gain insight into membership issues in various parts of the US.

While it has been mentioned that the location of the organization's headquarters should be close to the largest concentration of the membership, no strong evidence can be gathered to suggest that the actual physical location of this association's headquarters would contribute positively to the mission statement of this organization. Active and up to date communication between the staff, trustees and the membership does contribute greatly to a membership that can actively participate and be a part of the organization and can benefit from the services offered. Communication with the membership is currently handled through direct mailing, the ASA publications, E-news and the website. The location from which these types of communications originate shouldn't be affected by location of the headquarters.

## **7) Publication**

The ASA publication team is led by Linda Kesler, business manager, sales staff led by Annie Allen, 2-3 graphic designers, editor, Dan Rieder, and production manager, Jim Largess. Web capabilities have again been added so Kathy Shafer would logically be a part-time employee. Our publications, Register (official publication to the membership), SimTalk (outreach to the commercial cattleman), and American Simbrah (distributed most widely in the Gulf coast, where Brahman influence is important) serve three distinct segments as well. If ASA headquarters were to remain in Bozeman, it is highly likely this staff would remain intact with the expected job changes and retirements. If, however, the office were to relocate it is certain the staff would lose Largess and Kesler. Perhaps Rieder, Allen and graphic designers may remain if allowed to work remotely, but it is just as likely they may not remain if a move were to take place. This appears to leave three choices. First would be to outsource the entire publication. Second, if key members remained just the production may be outsourced. The third choice would be to completely start over at the new location.

In summary, to advance and maintain the top level services that are expected from ASA, a motivated, well trained and for many positions, highly specialized and skilled, staff must be employed. While a new staff can, in most of the positions, be hired and trained in a new location, many valuable employees will be lost at a time when ASA is gaining the most exposure and acceptance in the cattle industry. A disruption in any of the various services listed above could have a negative long term effect on the forward movement in these areas. The ability to conduct business, educate and communicate with ASA's members, customers and other interested parties from any location by way of a well designed, user friendly website is integral to the ASA's success.