

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Message from the President

*F*or the past several months, the Board of the Canadian Simmental Association has been struggling with the need for our members to access a genetic evaluation model and process that enables us to provide the quality and consistency that our membership and all other segments of the beef industry is demanding.

Recently, the CSA Board made the decision to enter into a service agreement with Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) for our genetic evaluation services. This decision was not made lightly and is effective immediately; work has already begun. With the continued need for the Canadian Simmental Association to focus on enhanced genetic evaluations and breed improvement, the Board of Directors decided this was the best option for members now and leading the breed into the future.

The long-term impact for members will be very positive – we will have a new set of numbers that should have little effect on the ranking of bulls in the Canadian population. This new evaluation should not change animal rankings; our review of an evaluation from a trial run clearly indicated the heaviest is still showing up as the heaviest.

AGI is proving itself to be a leader in genetic evaluations; it currently provides services to the Canadian Angus and Canadian Limousin Associations. As we move forward it is expected that AGI will lead the way in including DNA and other new technologies into our evaluations in the future.

This move ensures we have a stable genetic evaluation, access to experts and researchers, excellent customer service and more control over our own genetic evaluations; through its relationship with AAA, AGI has 12 IT professionals plus a geneticist and professionals with extensive breed improvement knowledge, providing tremendous in-house expertise for genetic evaluations. This team of experts coupled with CSA's resources of Dr. Bob Kemp and Sean McGrath, further strengthening our overall genetic team and ensures we control the evaluation. This move will also enable us to react quicker and address such issues as incorporation of ET calves and import animal data, items that have been an issue in the past

While we will no longer be using the American Simmental Association for genetic evaluation services, we have, and continue, to value the relationship that we have established with the ASA and look forward to that continuing.

This means some changes, but is the beginning of an evolution to an even stronger genetic evaluation program to better support you as a member, as well as your commercial clients.

We have included some questions and answers as part of this notice. Watch Simmental Country and future e-newsletters for updates on our continuing focus and commitment towards breed improvement. If you have immediate questions, please feel free to contact our Member/Industry Liaison, Bruce Holmquist, at (403) 988-8676 or bholmquist@simmental.com

Respectfully,

Murray Jacobson, President
Canadian Simmental Association

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON CSA PARTNERSHIP WITH AGI

1. Why the change from the North American system?

Cornell University phased out of genetic evaluation services so ASA made a change two years ago – evaluation is now run in-house on the Cornell system. We reviewed options, including joining the American Simmental Association in their in-house service. However, long-term discussions to implement change with ASA did not progress as we had hoped. Thus, we made the decision to go with AGI because of the added benefits we felt were invaluable to members and future breed improvements and innovations. It will give members enhanced ability to service their commercial customer base and provide genetic evaluation that will continue to rank animals for genetic selection decisions.

2. What are the benefits of partnering with AGI?

The key benefits are long-term commitment to development, their commitment to research and the stability and sustainability of the model. They offer an incredible level of support and we have the ability to tie into the largest beef cattle database in the world, and the opportunity to better service our commercial customer. The AAA has 12 programmers on staff plus a geneticist, a professional with extensive breed improvement knowledge, plus a five year agreement with University of Georgia. The AGI (UGA) model produces very similar results to the Cornell model and is the model adopted by the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium (NBCEC) (which includes Cornell) to receive long-term support and commitment. AGI's adaptive and flexible model can meet evolving member needs (eg: incorporate ET, incorporate gene marker data).

3. Why AGI? What is their track record?

Resources and sustainability were key in the decision. AAA is a huge organization and they have a group of several programmers and technicians as well as geneticists dedicated to the system. It currently delivers the American Angus Association evaluation (largest genetic evaluation in beef cattle in the world), the Canadian Angus Association evaluation (since 2000), and the Canadian Limousin Association and North American Limousin Foundation evaluations (starting July 2008).

AGI Objectives

- To provide services to the beef industry that would assist in the genetic evaluation of cattle traits
- To develop and promote technology for use by the beef industry including DNA technology
- To conduct research, develop and prove new science and technology to benefit all beef producers

As new technology is developed and implemented in the beef industry to assist in the characterization of genetics, AGI is committed to positioning producers to adopt these innovations.

4. Are there any additional costs and, if so, who will pay them?

The genetic evaluation is a service offered by the Canadian Simmental Association to members and there will not be any increased fees for members.

5. What will the benefits be to industry partners?

The key benefits will be a state of the art evaluation that includes multi-breeds and also the largest beef cattle database in the world. This advanced model allows and encourages genetic selection within the CSA population.

6. What will this mean for the new EPD system?

Preliminary results show that the ranking of animals will not change significantly with the new approach. The discussion on base and approach may mean that EPD appear very similar, or may appear quite different. The important thing is that animals are ranked correctly for the trait of interest.

7. What does this mean for the breeders/producers?

It will mean an enhanced ability to service their commercial customer base, and genetic evaluations that will rank animals for genetic selection decisions.

8. If the number are based solely on Canadian input, will it provide an accurate evaluation?

Yes. Our evaluation will be as accurate as any other.

9. What will the end result be from this change?

A new evaluation based on Canadian data

10. Will this benefit all members of the association (red, black, traditional, etc)?

This move will benefit all members of the association by allowing for individual programs to further market their attributes to the industry. It will not create further distinctions within the breed.

11. What will the numbers show under the new system (better for CDN cattle, etc.)?

We have not yet made a decision on base. The cattle will rank very similarly to what we see in the NA run and will be based to fairly and accurately portray Canadian Simmental relative to other populations.

12. How will this affect our relationship with the ASA?

Our relationship with ASA extends well beyond genetic evaluation services and we hope our relationship will remain strong and vibrant.

13. Will the US continue to use our numbers in their calculations?

Not our raw data but perhaps our historic data. In the past, ASA has at times removed CSA data when displaying genetic trend lines, eg. birth weight.

14. How will this impact the relationship between Canadian and American breeders?

EPD adjustment factors can/will be developed to convert between the runs much like we have between the Canadian metric and US systems.

15. What are the timelines?

Details such as base and conversions will be worked out from August through to Spring 2009. The first run of the evaluation begins with the Fall 2008 numbers, using Simmental data only.

16. Will data submission processes change?

No.

For more information, please contact:

Bruce Holmquist
Member/Industry Liaison
(403) 988-8676
bholmquist@simmental.com