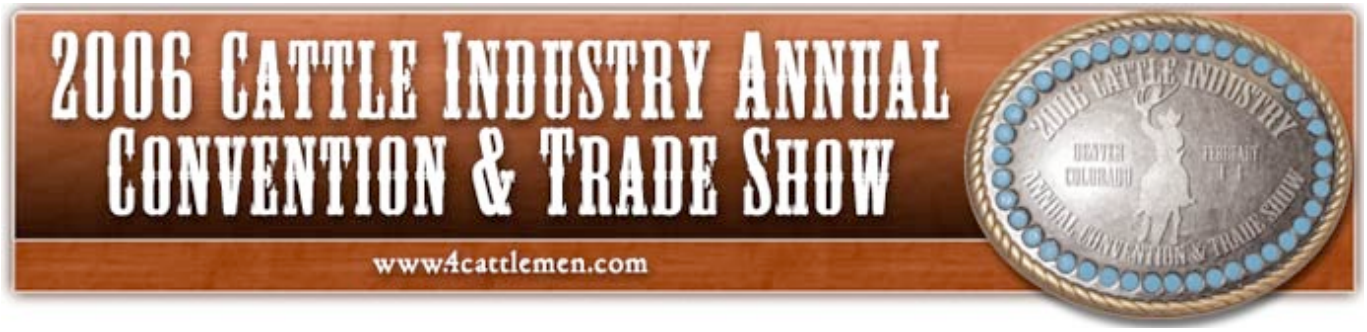
Angus Productions Inc.'s coverage of the



Using Data Feedback Effectively

by ***Meghan Soderstrom***

DENVER, CO (Feb. 1, 2006) — Data is only useful if the interpretation considers all inputs, Ben Brophy, manager of value added alliances for Cargill Cattle Feeders LLC, told attendees Feb. 1 at an animal identification (ID) breakout session of the Cattle Industry Convention's Cattlemen's College®.

Data generated from a national animal ID system may have useful applications with Cargill's Quality System Assessment (QSA) program to gain export approval to Japan, Brophy said. Cargill's QSA focuses predominantly on verifying animal source and age, but Brophy said producers can generate other useful data, too.

He encouraged attendees not to be intimidated by QSA program requirements because "it's largely a function of simply documenting what you are already doing … Don't let the terms 'processes' and 'procedures' overcomplicate the matter. It just means explain what records you keep to verify the source and age of your cattle."

Source and age data can do more than just help producers export product to Japan, he said; recordkeeping can improve their business if producers also track performance information.

Although a national animal ID system must first focus on disease traceability, it must also have capabilities for data retrieval and use by producers, Brophy said. He then quickly added that producers must know what to do with the data that is generated.

Producers can use the performance data to help make management and marketing decisions, he said, but only if they consider all factors that influence the data. "Interpretation of data is critical to glean correct conclusions."

Brophy said the effects of genetics, health and environmental factors all influence cattle performance — and thus performance data — before they arrive at the feedlot and once they are there.

He emphasized that "far more powerful conclusions can be drawn by comparing data subgroups than by using individual carcass data to cull cows in a commercial operation." He said sire group is one of the most important data subgroup that should be looked at.