

Angus Information Management Software – 2.5

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I register my animals electronically?

Yes, but maybe not in the way you think. The information to register an animal is entered into AIMS and then a short export process creates a file with the appropriately formatted information. That file is then transmitted to the Association, either on disk or as an email attachment.

Can I transfer online?

Yes, you can Register and Transfer new calves. If an animal's registration is stored electronically (i.e. a registration paper was not printed), you can also submit a Transfer file to electronically transfer those animals to a new owner(s).

How do I put AI sires into the database?

They can either be manually entered through the Add new animal process, or you can email, fax or call in a list of registration numbers and we will send back a file to import into the software. The cost to get the data from the Association is \$1.00 per head for owned cattle and \$2.00 per non-owned with a \$15.00 minimum. In addition to the requested animal, breeders receive the animals that make up its three-generation pedigree.

Do you have a file that I can import into the software for my ultrasound?

Yes, the process starts with a request from you – similar to an EPD update request – where we return a file to import the ultrasound data and adjusted values.

How do I do the simulated breeding?

Both the dam and the sire must be on your database with EPDs in order for this process to work. Go to the Breeding tab, click on the Simulated Breeding button and highlight the dam that you want to use. Put in the criteria that you want the calves to meet, and then click the selected sires to see the resulting calf EPDs. A pen of sires can be used, or you can compare to the National Sire Evaluation (NSE) database.

Can I pull animals from the NSE report into my database?

No. Due to differences in the number and size of fields between the two databases, this is not yet possible.

What's the proper procedure for entering ET records?

Actually, this is beyond the scope of this short document, but it is covered in the Help file. The key is to start at the very beginning of the ET process – breeding the donor cow – and then enter *every* step. If you follow the complete process, it actually works quite well.

What are the computer hardware requirements?

In today's world of computers, they are actually quite reasonable. In general, the computer simply needs to be able to "comfortably" run Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, XP and Windows 7. More specifically, it is best to have at least a 300 MHz computer, 64 Meg of RAM and 1 Gig of hard drive space. You must also have a CD-ROM in order to install the program. [Note: these are very old specs originally written when computers didn't have nearly the capabilities of today's computers – you could probably buy a computer with these specs at a garage sale!]

How much is the software?

\$495. Yes, some people feel this is above average, especially for smaller herds, but we compare very favorably to other comparably featured software products. Other cattle record management programs can cost less, but often leave out certain features to compensate; ours is the same price for the full version.

I only have a few head of cattle, can you sell it to me for less than \$495; or is there a smaller version for smaller breeders?

Just like the Association's membership demographics, 70% of AIMS users own 10 head or less. Any size herd can benefit from AIMS and it would be very difficult to administer a variable price or variable size program.

Can I add commercial/non-registered animals?

Yes, you can add as many other animals as you want, simply by using the Add New Animal process.

What is Crystal?

The full name is actually Crystal Report Writer – we generically refer to it as Crystal. This is a separate software package that can be purchased online. It is a program that specializes in accessing databases and formatting the data into reports. Crystal is extremely powerful, which also tends to make it hard to learn. However, once you get started and become even a little proficient, it makes AIMS an even more valuable program. All of the existing reports in AIMS were created with Crystal. You don't have to own Crystal to use the AIMS reports, but if you want to make changes to the style or content of a report, you will need Crystal.

What instructional material is available?

The software comes with a 30-minute introductory video showing all of the basics of the software. The Help file is solely based on a printed manual and although we don't include a printed manual, the file to do so is on the AIMS installation CD. There are also occasionally workshops and demonstrations around the country, either at major Angus events or specially organized events for AIMS. We can also setup online classes for either small groups or even one-on-one by way of the Internet (www.gotomeeting.com)

What kind of support is available?

We offer free phone support for AIMS; you pay for the call, we pay for the support. This is available during normal Association business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., M-F, CST). The phone number is 816-383-5100 or you can email us at aims@angus.org.

What about upgrades to the software in the future? Will they cost anything?

Yes, there will be upgrades, but potential costs depend on the complexity of the upgrade as well as the wishes of the Association's Board of Directors. History shows that upgrades have been very reasonable in cost, and often free. Upgrades typically come out at least once a year, but there is no set schedule; it depends on the amount of material that needs to be changed or added. We also provide “patch” files at www.angus.org/aims throughout the year for minor fixes and enhancements.

Is the software easy to use?

For most people, it is very easy, especially if you have experience with the Windows environment. The key is to learn AIMS in small pieces; don't try to learn the whole thing the first week. Rome wasn't built in a day, software can't be learned in a day either.

How do I get updated EPDs back on my herd?

You simply go through the Export process to create a request file. It will contain *all* of the animals in your database, including ancestral animals. Send the file to the Association (email, modem or disk) and we return a disk that you will import. This will update all owned animals for a flat \$15; if you wish to also update the ancestral animals, it is \$1.00 per head. You can also use a feature we call Webservice – look under the File command and then Webservice for information.

What's the best feature of the software?

That's really a hard question to answer. Certainly a key feature is the quick access to animal information. The tab concept for accessing each animal in AIMS makes it easy and quick to go from an animal's weaning information directly to yearling, or calving, or breeding, etc. Some users would rank the simulated breeding as the best feature. Another user stated that the ability to name animals simply by clicking on the sire and dam's names (i.e. not use the keyboard at all) is the best feature. Another great feature is the ability to electronically exchange information with the Association. But maybe the best overall reason is the stability of the American Angus Association. Many software packages have come and gone, but by having the support of the Association, it is virtually guaranteed that users will always have a way to get support for the AIMS software package. We're also very proud of the staff that supports the software – good people are always a good feature.