

American Angus Association Claw Set and Foot Angle Frequently Asked Questions



How is the data collected?

The Association has been collecting foot scores since 2015. Members have reported two scores for claw set and foot angle. Both scores are recorded on a 1 to 9 scale with 5 being ideal.

For claw set, a 5 depicts toes that are straight and symmetrical, whereas animals with widely open and divergent toes would score a 1. Animals scoring 7 or 8 have toes that tend to curl inward, and a score of 9 identifies animals with toes completely curling over one another.

An ideal animal for foot angle would have a 45-degree set to its pastern. A score of 9 would include animals with an extremely weak pastern set. A score of 1 identifies an animal with no set to its pasterns, and as a result, the animal is very straight through its toes and front end. Few animals would score a 1 in the foot angle category with today's Angus genetics.

What are the EPDs for foot score?

Members submit two foot-score data points, claw set and foot angle. A low genetic correlation (0.22) exists between the two traits. Due to low correlation, these scores are evaluated as separate traits and separate EPDs, called Claw Set (Claw) EPD and Foot Angle (Angle) EPD.

Which is better a higher or lower EPD for foot angle and claw set?

Lower EPD for both. Because foot angle and claw set scores only falling into the 5 through 9 categories are used in this research EPD evaluation, a lower or more negative EPD indicates a sire that is better able to produce progeny with more ideal feet. In other words, a lower EPD sire should produce a group of progeny that more readily score a 5.

If only scores of five or higher are being used to compute EPDs, should I stop sending in scores that are 4 or less?

Absolutely not. Currently, not enough phenotypes, or records, have been reported with scores of one through four for either foot angle or claw set. It means that currently those phenotypes are not useful for evaluation; however, it's important that producers continue to use the whole one through nine scale when scoring feet to make sure animals are characterized correctly. In the future if more one through four scores are reported, enough data could be collected to start using these scores in the evaluation.

How should I start collecting the data? When is the best time to send in scores?

Members can report foot scores on individual animals as soon as the animal reaches yearling age, or 320-440 days of age. Older scores on 18-month-old bulls, females or mature cows also can be reported. Breeders are encouraged to send in scores on mature females as more variation in foot scores is present at older ages. Repeated measures, or taking more than one score on an individual throughout its lifetime, are valuable data points for the evaluation, and all scores are included in the analysis to inform foot score EPDs. The Association has provided guides.