**VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REF SOCIETY DNA TESTING**

The Sire Verified Aberdeen-Angus Scheme is an initiative promoting the DNA testing of all Aberdeen-Angus cattle, to prove they belong to the World’s premier breed. This has been a major focus of the Society since 2017 and will continue in the coming years, and the Society has been working to provide members with an affordable, cost-effective method to expand their DNA testing.

This scheme has 2 core programmes which involve DNA testing.

1. Herd Integrity and enhancement of selection tools
2. Product Integrity and Traceability

Further to the recent announcements of the change to the destination of DNA samples from the 1st of June 2020, whereby the samples taken should be sent to PEDIGREE HOUSE and market “DNA SAMPLES” We need to let you know about the changes that we are bringing about, and why.

Herd Integrity **DNA**

It was passed at Council in March 2020 that we would reshape what we are doing in terms of the DNA testing scheme that we have had in place since January 2019 for Bull calves being registered. Weatherby’s Scientific, based in the Republic of Ireland will be carrying out all herd integrity DNA testing.

Weatherby’s Scientific are and have been involved in DNA testing for many species and have a great deal of expertise in the field of Bovine Genetics on a global scale. They are already in communication with ABRI and communication for storage of the data and the possibility of its inclusion in our breeding programme is a simple one should we chose to go that way.

On advice gained through recent meetings with independent consultants, it has been decided that considerable value can be added to our breeding programme by increasing the density of the testing that we are doing. In simple terms working with a bigger “bar code” for each animal we test and given all the information at the disposal of Council at the last meeting it was decided that we should follow this route.

The benefits that we will continue to gain from this scheme can be summarised as follows; -

* With the larger amount of information gleaned from the denser test we expect there to be less retesting required following this change.
* In cases of doubt on actual sire up to three nominated sires per test can be submitted at no extra cost
* With the larger amount of data in cases where we have an incorrectly named sire, we can search the database for that animal as we go forward.
* Streamlining of the herd integrity testing procedure by using one provider
* As is being proven through recent events in the Cattle industry breeders and therefore the Society must have followed all due diligence to prove the description and parentage declared on a pedigree certificate is correct.
* Pedigree certificates are a description of goods and fall under and are subject to the legislation contained in the Description of Goods and the Consumer rights act 2015.
* This change has been adopted by Council to protect you as breeders and the Society from potential litigation going forward.

**Further benefits**

On the information gained from our independent consultants the only way forward to improve our breed is to add Genomics to our selection programme to give breeders another tool in the box. We can identify animals with genetic markers that are the most feed efficient, low carbon emitters, eating quality and so the list goes on it is endless. The benefits in terms of production that has been witnessed in the Dairy industry is testament to the effectiveness of the practice where improvement in performance has been speeded up.

As forecast we will be heading towards the number one breed on BCMS by the close of 2020, we feel it is also very important that we take the lead in innovation that should be expected of the number one breed and be in a position to offer those within our membership the opportunity to utilise the principle of Genomics to improve their herd performance.

**Council Decisions affecting the way we work**,

* Bulls being registered will be switched to the higher density test from the date of new scheme launch on 1st July 2020 fully funded by the Society for the minimum period of 1 year
* From 1st July 2020 the Society requires all females to be sire verified and myostatin tested **at registration of first calf**. The retained sample collected and in storage at registration will be tested.
* The Society encourages all members selling heifers for breeding to ensure they are 50k SNP tested **prior** to sale to make sure their declaration on the pedigree certificate is verified.
* The Society has a very competitive rate agreed for 50K SNP testing and **all** testing should be carried out via the Society administration team.
* Anyone wishing to avail themselves of this facility for animals that fall outside the Society funded scheme can do so at a cost of £20.00 per animal tested.
* The level of support or otherwise by the Society for the scheme will be reviewed at March Council meeting annually, communicated to the membership, and any changes become effective 1st July of that year.
* For any females already tested to the required standard on a 50k SNP, and through the Society, whoever initiated, and previously paid for the test, will be entitled to claim reimbursement, from the Society at the support rate in place when the first calf is registered, if any, from that female.
* The database is the exclusive property of the Membership of the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society any access granted to the data will be at the discretion of Council as elected members and only for the purposes of breed improvement.

**Product integrity and Traceability: -**

**This programme supports the Certified Aberdeen Angus Beef Scheme**

* Our relationship with IdentiGEN is paramount to the success of this scheme and the future protection of the breed and the brand. We will continue with a close working relationship where we will benefit from IdentiGEN’s expertise and industry relationships to further protect and conserve the marketplace and premium that we enjoy as Aberdeen Angus Breeders and finishers.

More details on this programme will follow in due course.

**A REMINDER OF CHAGES THAT AFFECT YOU**

**“Please help us, to help you, to get it right from the outset”**

* As of **1st June 2020,** members should no longer submit their DNA tissue samples to IdentiGEN.  Instead we would like you to send them direct to the society office addressed as follows,

**DNA SAMPLES**

**‘Pedigree House’,**

**6 King’s Place,**

**Perth,**

**PH2 8AD.**

* We are in the process of switching our DNA testing regime to one laboratory.  If you could please ensure that any packaging etc. you may have been re-labelled to the correct address this will ensure a smooth transition.  If you have any questions regarding this please contact Caroline, Fiona, or Yvonne.
* NB It is very important that you do not include any other correspondence with the samples as these packages will not be opened but kept refrigerated from arrival and sent on weekly to our provider.