

from the office

LEAD IN

By Richard Spader, Executive Vice President, American Angus Association



“For many reasons, the issue of size needs to be out of the closet and on the table where the American Angus Assn.’s ad campaign has placed it.”

“The elephant ad controversy” is the title of the lead editorial in the Nov. 29 issue of *The Drovers Journal*.

It, of course, refers to the new Angus advertising campaign that has hit such a sore spot with some producers of Continental cattle.

Beneath this editorial, in the letters section of the newspaper, was yet another letter protesting *The Drovers Journal*’s wisdom in running the ad. The writer, among other things, calls the ad “. . . inaccurate, outrageous and in very bad taste . . .”

Obviously, the letter writer did not read much of the ad’s copy which points out the facts that “. . . an ideal animal (for the packer) weighs between 1,050 and 1,200 lb. and produces well marbled cuts that look like they were punched from a mold . . . many elephant-sized breeds must be fed to 1,400 lb. or more before they grade USDA Choice.”

The ad campaign is doing what it was designed to do, which is to grab people’s attention, maybe give them a chuckle, and make them take a serious look at what they are doing in their commercial cattle programs. The ads certainly are not against crossbreeding, but they are indirectly against unplanned crossbreeding that results in a

cow herd that has too much Continental blood in it for top efficiency and that produces too many calving problems from calves that are unpredictable in performance and that finish out at weights which are too heavy for the general retail market.

The second ad in the “elephant” series, which appeared in one magazine in December and will run generally in January, addresses the problem of calving problems, citing research done at Texas A&M University and at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center. Calving difficulty with the resulting death loss, added labor costs, veterinary bills and re-breeding delays is probably the major contributor to decreased profits in the cattle business. As Dr. Harlan D. Ritchie of Michigan State University pointed out at the Beef Cattle Seed Stock Seminar last November at Iowa State University:

“What is the functional cow?

1. She works for you instead of you for her.
2. She is trouble-free.
3. If she costs extra time and labor, she is non-functional.”

It is for these reasons the new ad points out to the commercial cattle producer, “You’re in business to produce bigger profits, not just bigger calves. So turn to Angus . . . the Business Breed.”

With the large amount of indiscriminate crossbreeding going on, it is a fact that more cattlemen than ever before can profitably put large, growthy, performance-tested Angus bulls to use in their herds. The resulting cross will provide them with a more uniform calf crop in both color and predictability. It

will provide them with a more salable calf crop. They will pull fewer calves and get more cows rebred on the second heat period after calving, and it will provide them with a better set of replacement heifers than they would get from using one of the “elephant breeds.”

As *The Drovers Journal* Editor Fred Knop concludes in his editorial on “the elephant ad controversy”:

“For many reasons, the issue of size needs to be out of the closet and on the table where the American Angus Assn.’s ad campaign has placed it. Somewhere between the average size of the British breeds and the Continental breeds is what is right for the commercial breeders. May the controversy continue until each breed contributes up to its potential in the attainment of this objective.”

So the new ad campaign appears to be working and it is also drawing good reviews from unbiased observers. However, by itself it will not bring about much change in what commercial cow-calf producers are doing. You, the individual Angus breeders, are the ones on the firing line, or more specifically, the selling line. It is up to you to make the individual contacts with commercial cattle breeders in your area to provide them with the opportunity to purchase top quality Angus bulls. So please take advantage of the attention that the new campaign has brought to the Angus breed and make a special effort to promote your cattle this bull sale season. The results should pay off for both you and for the new bull customers you develop.

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