

# doing a better job

## MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

### The Power of Creative Packaging Sells Beer and Beef Cattle, Too

As we scan the shelves in a grocery or department store, our decisions on what to buy and what to ignore are often based as much upon how a product is displayed and packaged as upon its quality or real value.

A manufacturer recently tested a single product in two different packages. The name of the product was the same on both packages, as was the information and guarantee printed on the box. The only difference was that one came in a bright attractive box, and as a result it accounted for the bulk of the sales.

A few years ago several brands of beer were tested. Initially a taste panel poured different brands from identical, unmarked bottles. In this test they selected Brand A as best tasting. But when the beer was finally presented to the panel in the familiar bottles with the familiar labels, the panel members selected a completely different brand as

best tasting. The psychological effect of the familiar package actually affected their taste.

Although we don't put our cattle in boxes when we sell them, we can put the same power of creative packaging to work for us. We have all known this for years. Commercial cattlemen claim that they want thin, hard-muscled cattle that can go right to work for them, but they invariably pay more money for better conditioned bulls.

But cattle packaging is more than the condition of the animal. It involves the combined impression that you, your employees, your approach to selling, your farm or ranch and your overall herd make on the potential buyer. Each creates a subtle impression that affects the actual value of the product you sell—your registered Angus cattle.

You know the kind of people you like to do business with. They are polite, appropriately dressed, courteous, and helpful. They make you feel as if they believe you are the most important thing in their life at the time they are talking with you—and indeed you probably are. They are helpful, take the time to understand your business and what it is you want and need. In short, they make you feel comfortable and build your confidence in their ability to help you. That's also the kind of people your customers and potential customers prefer.

You also know the kind of farms or ranches that make you feel good when you drive up to them. They are not necessarily show places, in fact this can be a disadvantage. But they are attractive, have a comfortable feeling, and are well planned for buyer convenience. These places communicate that the owner is organized, neat and has an eye for detail. Thus, you assume that these qualities dictate the way he or she approaches cattle breeding and record keeping. Your potential customers are affected the same way.

You know how you like to inspect cattle that you might be interested in buying. You want them close to the headquarters, not a half hour's drive

over rough ranch roads and through bow-string tight wire gates. You like to have the sale cattle separated from the others, with their records handy. And, when you buy a bull, you like to see his mother, and certainly his sire, if he is

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not a familiar A.I. bull. There's no reason to provide anything less for your customers.

You know the way you like to see cattle—clean, in good condition (but not fat) and with no injuries or serious faults. You don't like to see cattle that have problems in with the good cattle, any more than you like to see dented cans with torn labels on the grocery shelves, or irregulars or seconds mixed in with good clothing at the department store. Like most of us, you are impressed by a quality product that has a quality look. There is no substitute for high quality, performance-tested seed stock that can go into another herd and get the job done. High quality genetics deserve the best quality package.

If packaging and promotion weren't important to our buying decisions, then nearly everything we purchase and use would be generic and come in a plain wrapper. We would not care what brand of farm equipment we bought, and it could be painted a universal olive-drab. We would select our own products, without sales help, at a warehouse instead of an attractive, convenient, comfortable retail outlet.

But business doesn't work this way—not for groceries, not for beer, not for feed, seed or farm equipment, and not for registered Angus cattle either.

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