

MERCHANDISING



There's strength in numbers

At your Angus auction, more than anything else, you want people, a crowd of people on sale day. On the other side of the coin, you also want these people to be potential buyers who come to your sale because they like your cattle and want to use them in their program.

I know of sales where the crowd was small but the event was a success because a single buyer showed up who needed volume. His bidding kept prices at profitable levels. But that is the exception, not the rule.

When a Regional Manager includes in his report that there was a small crowd at a sale, the next sentence almost always reports low prices. Here are a couple of examples of RM reports from the past year. A regional manager who covers part of the Midwest wrote, "Small crowd on a nice day. Bulls and females should have brought more money."

From a Western state came this report: "Auction was at a new location. A number of bargains reflected conservative bidding by a small sale-day crowd."

Why do people not show up for some sales? It is usually at least one of three things:

1. Not enough people were informed of the sale and convinced that it was important for their business to be there.
2. People knew about the sale, but for whatever reason were not interested in the product that was offered.
3. Something beyond the control of the breeder kept people away--bad weather,

good weather that allowed them to do important field work, etc.

A few people or associations who sponsor sales don't realize that an auction is the culmination of a year-long or even a career-long merchandising program. How well the sale goes, assuming good quality cattle, is determined months or years ahead of auction day.

Throughout the year, and year after year, a good merchandising program pro-

are many things you can do a few weeks before the sale to boost buyer attendance.

Years ago I visited a herd a few weeks prior to their sale. The owner was spending most of his time on the telephone, talking with prospective buyers. His goal, he said, was to be sure he had one reasonable bid on each animal in the sale. This approach may not always work for the breeder who has 200 or more bulls to sell to commercial producers. But even in this

instance, every good potential buyer can be contacted by telephone and invited to attend the auction. At the same time, it is a good opportunity to deliver a low-key sales pitch, to explain which sale animals the breeder feels would best serve the potential customer's needs.

You can further tie down the commitment to attend on the part of the customer by making room reservations for him or her. And if you have a pre-sale party or social event, personally invite the prospect. A follow-up hand written invitation to the social event and sale will further insure attendance.

Just remember, a big crowd on sale day creates excitement and helps boost the sale average. If that big crowd is composed of interested potential customers, who have come to your place to buy, then you are in for a memorable sale day. One that you will want to repeat year after year. AJ



notes the benefits of a breeders herd. If this hasn't been done well ahead of sale day, then little that the breeder does a month or two ahead of the sale will overcome this lack of advertising and promotion. Sale ads, a great sale catalog, a hard-working sale manager, a conscientious regional manager can seldom pull in enough buyers to insure success if the herd hasn't been adequately merchandised over the years.

But even if you are well known, there

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