

## It Pays to Know the Rules of Advertising

From the looks of most livestock publications, many registered cattle producers invest in advertising space without putting enough money and effort into the product they are buying – the advertisement itself. Many ads ignore same basic advertising rules, and it costs the advertiser in lost readership.

This was the conclusion of an advertising expert who critiqued most of the newspapers and magazines represented by the Livestock Publications Council (LPC). Each year at the LPC annual meeting, an expert evaluates advertisements that run in these publications. They include most every livestock publication in the U.S.

Here are the criticisms he leveled at the ads:

*"There is too much stacked text."* He means one line of display type after another, often scattered all over the page. Each line makes a statement, but no overall message is sent. Ads should have a big display headline, then a block of "body copy" that presents your sales message.

*"Headlines are often just labels."* A headline should attract attention, and offer a benefit that is expanded upon in the illustration and the body copy. He used as an example a headline in very bold type that read, "The Source" – nothing more. Then the term was not mentioned again in the copy. The advertiser evidently assumed that every reader would know what "The Source" meant. If so, then he probably didn't need to run the ad.

*"Headlines don't communicate what*

*the ads are about."* At best, a headline should encapsulate the message of the ad. The headline should leave the sales message you want to communicate, even if the reader looks at nothing else in the ad.

*"Too many ads have little copy blocks all over the page."* Advertisers seem to want to put one idea here and another one over in the corner of the ad, with an-

stop by, invite them to do so and tell them how to make an appointment, or when you are sure to be at home. Ask people to do whatever it is you want them to do – and make it easy.

*"There is too much going on in these ads."* That's a common complaint. As I write this paragraph I am looking at a two-page spread with 16 photographs of 18 animals and 29 people. The copy un-

der each photo is set in six point type (Six point type is **this s m a 11**). There are 10 headlines or labels. It is all too much. Keep it simple and direct.

*"There are animals looking off the page all over the place."* Without exception, never have an animal looking off the page. It should face into the copy, or be looking at the reader. The reader's eye moves in the direction the animal is looking. If it looks off the page, it guides the reader away from your message.

*"A single advertiser's ad aren't consistent from one month to the next."* Your ads



other idea in a small copy block by the photograph. The reader must work to get the message in an ad like this, and most people won't do it. Ads should be simple, easy to read, and communicate the message almost immediately.

*"Too seldom is there anything in the ads to tell people how to act upon the information presented."* If you are selling semen, tell the reader who to contact, when and how. If you want people to send for a catalog, ask them to call or write and tell them how. If you want people to

should have consistent elements that identify them as yours.

If you have a copy of the old, green "How to Sell Angus Cattle" booklet read the article on page seven. It gives you the ingredients (the rules) of an advertisement. Learn how to use them and your ads will work harder for you.

**AJ**