

# Lead In

by Richard Spader, executive vice president



## 38% is a good start

A member of our staff recently reported the Angus breed currently comprises 38% of all registered beef cattle in the United States. He based his figures on the annual report of the National Pedigreed Livestock Council (NPLC), which is an organization of executive officers from various nonprofit breed associations of dairy, equine, sheep, goat, swine and beef species.

I know there are beef breeds that don't belong to the NPLC, but they are among the smaller ones that won't affect the final numbers in a dramatic way. At the very least, the Angus breed comprises 35% of total registrations. You don't have to trace back many years to find that figure at 20%-25%.

The bottom line is that the Angus breed has a larger market share of registered beef cattle in 2001. The total pool of registered cattle has declined over the past three decades, while Angus registrations have increased dramatically in the same period.

For those of you who know me well, you realize I'm a firm believer in the purebred concept. I think it is basic to, and helps to generate the most highly accurate and dependable database of information for, the

beef industry. Some would argue that you don't need pure breeds to develop accurate expected progeny differences (EPDs), but that's a discussion for another column. I contend our database is one of the main reasons that we have gained the position we currently hold in the beef industry. And it's an asset that needs to be protected.

**But that's not** the only reason for Angus demand. At a time in our business when there are lots of black, polled breeds from which to choose, I still believe that cattlemen buy Angus for Angus advantages, not just because the breed is purebred, black and polled. This is best supported by the fact that some breeds, while rapidly becoming black and polled over the past decades, are still having a hard time gaining market share in the beef industry. If anything, they're losing ground.

The point was made vividly by a friend of mine who manages an auction service. He told me recently that if you have Angus-sired calves, you need to announce it when they're in the ring before the bidding starts because the Angus calves will bring more

money. A summary of auction market sales by breed of sire that has been conducted by the Supply Development Branch of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) points this out time and again.

So, as the spring bull-sale season goes into full swing, I believe the potential for expanding our base is excellent. Many factors are in our favor — not the least of which is the continued growth of CAB and the emphasis that more and more beef-merchandizing programs are placing on quality and leanness in the beef they sell. Marketing grids across the country point to the value of Angus genetics in meeting their customers' demands. And with today's Angus database, registered and commercial cattle producers can select the bulls and breeding programs that help make directional change in their herds and for whatever traits are important to them.

**This pull-through effect** for quality and consistency in the end product, backed by the traditional advantages of solid color, a polled head, maternal ability, ease of management and adaptability, all are reasons commercial cattlemen seek Angus genetics in the beef business today. In some ways we have a new and improved Angus product to offer — one with the greatest number of advantages for astute, profit-minded cattle producers.

Yet, even with all of this going for you, commercial cattlemen won't beat a path to your door. They have to know you have superior cattle that will help them make a profit in a competitive cattle industry. The future looks bright for the registered Angus breeder who has a sound, database-driven breeding program and backs it with an aggressive, targeted marketing plan and service after the sale.

Today we have 38% of the registered beef industry. We believe there is still plenty of opportunity for growth and additional market share.

*Richard J. Spader*