

Livestock Shows: Great Breed Promotion Tools

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Fairs, expositions, shows—large and small—have played an important role in the progress of the livestock and meat industry. Like sports events, they provide strong competition, generate excitement and enthusiasm, create interest.

Competition instills in breeders the desire to raise the right kind, the kind that will improve the breed as a source of seed stock, the kind that benefit the commercial breeder, feeder, packer and consumer.

At any show excitement and enthusiasm are important because they help motivate breeders, encouraging them to improve their herds and make necessary changes to keep up with the progress of the breed. When breeders become "barn blind," stagnant, their business can come to a standstill or even fall behind. Show attendance is good insurance against that.

And since the livestock industry is constantly changing, show judges themselves must keep up and to do so must stay active; they must keep abreast of progress and changes being made.

Both breeders and spectators can participate in visual appraisal at a show, something that gives them an opportunity to see proper animal type, frame, length, skeletal correctness and breed character, all necessary elements in good breed production. Cattle have changed drastically in the last 10 years or so in a move toward modernization, and many people first realized the tremendous change Angus breeders had made in their cattle when they attended a livestock show.

Exposure

And with the large genetic base in the Angus breed, the champions aren't the only ones to get attention from ringside. That animal standing fourth or fifth gets exposure, too, and it may suit the needs of many herds.

The livestock show is a natural place for Angus enthusiasts to get acquainted. Breeders from different areas and different walks of life can meet and visit about their problems, their breeding programs, the livestock industry. Shows also offer segments of the livestock industry and breed associations a natural audience, because during the course of a show, these groups can reach a large number of people. Meetings and educational events designed to inform and motivate breeders can be scheduled.

Probably one of the greatest advantages of the livestock show is its value as a promotional tool, something a breeder can use in advertising his herd and his breeding program. Many people, both rural and urban, attend the shows. Thousands more are exposed to them through the news media,

so breeders can even go one step farther and advertise their winnings in livestock publications.

Showing cattle is not a money-making proposition in itself. It costs money. But it is a great promotional investment, and everyone who exhibits cattle is promoting not only their own cattle but the entire breed.

People Behind the Scenes

Many times not enough credit is given to herdsmen and others responsible for caring for the animals on exhibit. These people spend an enormous amount of time and sacrifice a lot of sleep preparing for show day, fitting their animals to look their best for the judge. These people are to be commended for their countless efforts and for their desire to promote show cattle.

Livestock show managers are also important to the success of a show. A good manager understands the value of livestock and helps breeders promote their product by providing improved facilities and by remaining flexible, making changes to help breeders and owners exhibit their animals.

County shows are just as important as state fairs and other larger livestock shows. In fact, these are often the starting points for the future of the breeds, because they not only give 4-H and FFA members an opportunity to compete but also help teach them the basics of the livestock industry. County fairs teach these young people pride of ownership and sportsmanship, that being a good winner is as important as being a good loser.

And county fairs can be used to get young people interested in a breed. Through these shows, the youngsters can

be encouraged to become members of a breed association, to participate in association activities, to go on to regional and national shows and the national showmanship contest. And achievements at these events can be used in the American Angus Assn.-sponsored junior recognition program and the National Junior Angus Assn. It is the young people involved in these programs who are more than likely the future leaders of the American Angus Assn.

One Show Said It All

The recent National Western Stock Show in Denver pretty well sums up the value of livestock shows.

The 1980 National Western has to go down in Angus records as the beginning of the Angus explosion of the 1980s. The Angus show on the hill was the largest breed show in Denver this year, with 239 showing, surpassing Herefords for the first time in history.

When the judges were selecting the show's grand champion steer, more than 8,000 spectators saw that all eight animals up for final consideration were either black or had Angus breeding in their genetic make-up. Judge George Strathearn told the capacity crowd that the grand champion, an Angus-Chianina cross, was the kind of animal the industry needs. Strathearn said, "This steer had enough going underneath to show that he had been brought along right," adding, "I have felt for a long time that we had come to the point where these steers were getting too big. We have got to consider mothering and ease of calving along with the size of an animal." With that, Angus racked up another plus—mothering ability and ease of calving are two of the greatest advantages offered by Angus.

More Wins

Angus crossbreds won grand and reserve grand in the feeder pen competition. And Angus scored again in the fed beef contest—both the grand and reserve grand steer carcasses were straight-bred Angus.

The Angus herdsmen's banquet, held annually during the stock show, was the largest the association has ever sponsored. The Angus carload and pen show was one of the strongest in many years, with a huge crowd reflecting total interest. The bleachers were full, the pen fences lined with spectators. There was hardly a place to stand, let alone get a good view. There was definitely a lot of interest shown in the breed.

National Western spectators came from throughout the U.S., Canada, Argentina, Brazil and other foreign countries. Interest in the Angus breed was fantastic. Enthusiasm and excitement were everywhere.

And that's just one livestock show. 