

# LEAD IN

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We in the American Angus Assn. have fought a sometimes uphill battle over the years to bring a little more sanity and common sense to the beef cattle business.

Now, you can be proud of the fact that we are not alone in advocating the importance of such things as beef quality, moderate-size carcasses, and a few of the other factors that were overlooked a decade or more ago in the scramble for quick, short-term profits and single-trait selection.

One of the most gratifying talks at the 1986 National Cattlemen's Association Convention at San Antonio was given by William Parker, vice president, meat merchandising for Kroger Co.

"We are living in a world where everyone is buying quality," Parker told the some 5,000 people attending the convention. "It is amazing," he said, "that in a world where everyone is buying upscale, some people in the beef industry still want to sell downscale."

What the beef customer wants, Parker said, is a lean piece of meat

that has both marbling and taste. "We oppose any grade change," Parker said. "You don't make anything better by making it worse. Some stores may handle two grades (of beef) but we are selling taste and image."

Further, Parker urged when the beef industry gets its checkoff money that it be used to advertise beef to the consuming public through grocery stores. "If you want to reach more customers, you can do it through retailers. Let's do it together. Tyson (the chicken people) helps pay for ads. You can use your new checkoff money and co-op with us on advertising."

Not that Kroger isn't already putting their money where their mouth is.

"We in Kroger have just announced our new beef program in 1,100 stores in 18 states," Parker explained, "We will spend some \$20 million to promote beef. If we build our beef business, we will build Kroger."

The lack of consistency in feedlot cattle is another point we make in the current Angus advertising campaign. And consistency came in for its share of comment too at the NCA Convention.

"It is difficult now to buy even one lot of cattle that is uniform, so it will be hard to brand-identify fresh beef," said William Fielding, president of Excel Corporation, one of the nation's large beef packers. "We want a more uniform, consistent product. We are looking for cattle with certain leanness, right ribeye size, eating quality, and yield."

Fielding said that consistency was important in cattle size too. He said that Excel prefers cattle that weigh no more than 1,250 pounds, a theme that Kroger's Parker echoed also.

"Size is a factor in the retail level," Parker said, "and lack of consistency is a problem." He said that Kroger prefers cattle in the 600- to 800-pound carcass range, and that they have trouble marketing carcasses that weigh over 800 pounds.

All this talk about quality and consistency does not mean that fat cattle will come back in vogue. Far from it. Every indication is that we are going to have to concentrate on producing high-quality beef with a minimum of fat trim. Parker addressed this point too:

"One thing we are doing on our Kroger Grain-fed Choice Beef is to reduce the fat trim from one-half to one-quarter inch," he said. "This means we will sell 13 million fewer pounds of fat in 1986. People now associate beef with fat. Take the fat off and you can sell more beef."

So our work in the Angus business is still cut out for us. Consistent quality and highly efficient, moderate-sized cattle are two keys to increasing consumption of beef and improving our profits. But nearly as important is leanness, along with the right kind of promotion and information programs.

But when one adds it all up, Angus cattle have more to offer than any other breed. Our new slogan really means something. We are indeed—**ANGUS, The Business Breed.** AJ