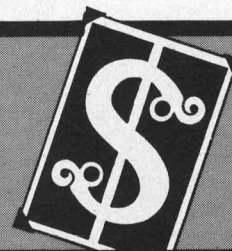


MERCHANDISING



Marketing to the "unknown"

Some agri-marketers call them the unknown or forgotten farmer. Others label them "sundowners." By whatever name, they are the part-time farmers who operate from 55 percent of all farms in the South to about 35 percent in the Midwest. And though they are small in number of acres, farmed, as a group, they account for a large portion of total farm production purchases.

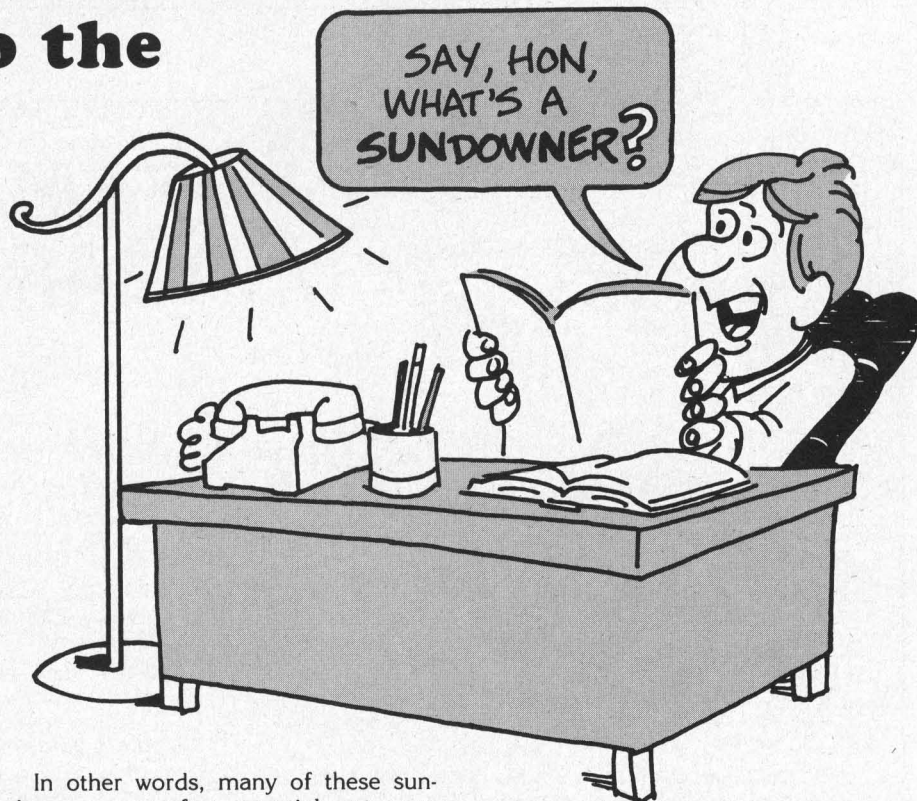
In an age when so many farm publications, economists and marketing agencies concentrate on "Mr. Big," the farms with gross sales of \$40,000 or less account for almost 23 percent of all feed sales and about the same percentage of farm machinery purchases and interest payments. With this kind of economic clout, they shouldn't be ignored, especially by those of us in the registered Angus cattle business.

A recent article in *AgriMarketing* magazine points out that there is little similarity among these sundowners. The husband may work while the wife stays home to look after the farm or the cattle. If it's young people getting started, the husband may work full time on the farm while the wife works in town. Some part-timers are well-to-do. They include the doctors, lawyers, business executives, and airline pilots with big off-farm earnings who want to live and maybe raise their family on a farm, in a rural environment.

What most do have in common is an average off-farm income of about \$40,000 and a farm located within 50 miles of the city where at least one family member is employed.

One reason that many marketers ignore these people is that they aren't easy to reach, at least not in the conventional way. Many large farm publications, in fact, strive to keep these people off their circulation lists.

What's more, as Joy Block of Doan Research pointed out in the *AgriMarketing* article, "They don't have the luxury of time. They conduct much of their business on the telephone and tend to depend upon those things they can be sure of."



In other words, many of these sundowners are perfect potential customers for you and for other breeders and merchandisers of registered Angus cattle.

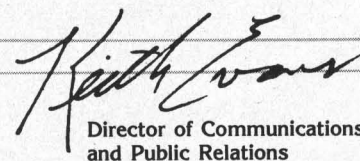
First of all, Angus breeders don't need the conventional means of locating part-timers. They can identify them in their community by several methods and contact them individually. By dealing one-on-one with these small farmers, you can answer their questions and provide them with all kinds of personal services and help large companies can't.

If, for example, some of the part-timers don't have enough grassland to support an economical herd, you can get their children involved with a heifer project and sign them up with the local 4-H club. When people with limited knowledge are just getting started in the cattle business, they need more help and advice than the average person. So, you need to be willing to breed their cows, teach them how to feed and care for registered cattle, and how to fit and show cattle. By being their main contact with the cattle industry, you assure yourself of future business and referrals.

Most of these people aren't raw recruits

to agricultural life. At least one in the family probably grew up on a farm or has some agricultural background. But they are not experts either nor are they usually acquainted with the agricultural support system in the community. That's why they need top-quality service. And because of their background, they have come to expect it. So be prepared if you go after their business.

The sundowners, despite the difficulty of finding and serving them, are a group of potential customers that provide many Angus breeders with an opportunity to expand their sales. Admittedly, the approach to selling them will be a little different. But because they have both the desire to farm and the money to do it right, it can be well worth the effort. **AJ**


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and Public Relations