

## Direct Mail Advertising Separates Grain from the Chaff

### Junkmail!

The name itself has an evil sound. Few people admit they like "junk mail," and why should they. None of us approve of the stuff that wastes paper, clutters our mailbox and jams our landfills.

On the other hand, we appreciate mail that includes a gift, inform us of something important, and offers us a benefit for our business or ourselves. This kind of mail is not "junk mail" — it is direct mail advertising. How we classify advertising mailed, in individual envelopes, depends upon our interest in and need for the product or service being sold, and the person or company offering it.

Why should you use direct mail to sell Angus cattle? Certainly not because it is cheap. You can reach more potential customers per dollar through print or broadcast media. For example, your message, via a full page black and white ad, delivered to the home of the 25,000 readers of this magazine, will cost \$695, or about three cents per subscriber. The postage alone on 2,000 first class direct mail pieces is \$620.

Use direct mail because it is flexible and can be targeted to the audience you select. It allows you to deliver a personal sales message to a select group of customers or potential customers, in exactly the way you want, at the time you want, and without the competition of other advertisers. If the prospect opens your direct mail envelope he or she is all yours— if you can grab and hold the person's interest.

Like all good advertising, direct mail should be prepared with the end result in mind. Know exactly how you want the reader to think and act after reading the material. Always present the message from the reader's point of view. This means stress benefits to the buyer.

Moreover, make it easy for the prospect to act. If you want them to attend a sale, visit your place on a tour or field day, or stop by to look at bulls before the breeding season, explain in detail how they can do it. Also tell who they should contact, and when, for further details.

Make sure each mailing piece is addressed correctly. Always spell the person's name and business correctly. Mail only to people you want to influence and who have authority to buy, or recommend a purchase.

Do follow-up research to find out how effective the mailing

was. Check the names of everyone who responds with the names on your mailing list. If possible ask callers or visitors what prompted the response. It can help you learn how to do better direct mail advertising in the future.

And finally, keep advertising— direct mail and otherwise. Tell your story over and over, again and again. It takes time to

create interest, and build a following. A single direct mail advertisement cannot substitute for advertising frequency.

What should you stuff in your direct mail envelope? That depends upon your goals and your budget. A personal letter written to an individual prospect, can be very effective. Or you can use brochures, catalogs or specially prepared direct mail ads or flyers. These can be combined with a personal note or letter, or a form letter. Unlike a print ad, direct mail provides great flexibility.

The other day we received a sample direct mail piece from D. Ray Hult of River Meadows Ranch in Salt Lake City, Utah. Mr. Hult wanted to show us how he had used the American Angus Association's publication "Price Premiums on Angus Influenced Cattle in the Commercial Marketplace," in his promotion. The mailing, which went out at Christmas time, also included a 1996

calendar featuring one of the ranch's bulls, and a Christmas-type form letter promoting the bull in the calendar picture, and the Hult production sale in March.

The letter was interesting and informative, but low-key, as a Christmas letter should be. It had no hard sell, but the calendar contained all the information a person would need to inquire about the sale or to get other information.

That's just one idea. You probably receive some good direct mail from other Angus breeders. Also, don't overlook the professional direct mail pieces you receive from larger advertisers. They are usually designed by professionals who know how to get results. What works for them might work for you.



Handwritten signature of Keith Evans

Keith Evans, Director of Communications & Public Relations