

# doing a better job

## MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Livestock advertising salesmen know that the best advertiser is often the person who is planning a dispersion.

It is an odd situation. Many a cattle breeder while still in the business of producing and selling registered seed stock pinches advertising dollars like fresh prey in an eagle's talons. But when it's time to go out of business the sky's the limit. It suddenly dawns on the breeder that if he is going to get the herd of cattle sold that people are going to have to know about the sale and understand what a great herd has been developed over the years. At that point he is often willing to invest as much as 4 or 5 percent of the gross value of the cattle to insure that they are properly advertised.

It's ironic, but in many cases if the breeder had followed the same line of thinking earlier there would be no dispersion to advertise. It is a proven fact that if you have a quality product, one that will satisfy the needs of potential customers, and you advertise and promote that product effectively it will generate sales and profits. It is also a fact that few profitable Angus herds are dispersed, except in the case of death, retirement or some other factor that does not permit the owner to continue operating the business.

For what are understandable but not justifiable reasons, many farms or ranches are reluctant to advertise. First of all, they don't like to brag. Rural people are generally modest and to tell their friends and neighbors about their cattle, and sing the praises

of their herd to every potential customer within a 100-mile radius of their farm smacks of bragging.

What's more, farm people are production oriented, not sales oriented. Cattle producers voted down two befeerendums, largely because they didn't see the need for raising \$40 to \$50 million for beef promotion and information. When they think of salesmen they too often think of the stereotypical feed salesmen who without an appointment can be counted on to show up at the most inopportune time and stay forever. I have been at numerous Angus meetings over the years where I attempt to find out how people view themselves. When asked how many have a background in sales or selling, virtually no one holds up their hand. Registered Angus breeders don't look at themselves as sales people.

These attitudes must change. Without ad-

vertising and salesmanship, no products are sold. And, everything else being equal, sales at profitable prices increase as the quality and quantity of advertising and salesmanship increase.

How much should you advertise? There are no set answers. But probably at least as much on a percentage of gross sales as you would be willing to spend on dispersing your herd. A breeder should be just as concerned with getting customers to the farm year in and year out, as if he were advertising for one big spectacular event—a dispersion.

Yes, livestock advertising salesmen like dispersions. But too often dispersions are an admission of defeat. Conversely, breeders are often surprised at how much their herd of cattle is really worth when they have a well run and promoted dispersion sale. It is just too bad they have to find this out as they are going out of business. **AJ**

