

MERCHANDISING



It had taken more than a half-day of hard driving to get there. I stood on the curb by the telephone in front of a quick service store as the Regional Manager I was traveling with phoned the manager of a nearby registered Angus operation.

I was along to do a story later on a commercial cattle operation. The Regional Manager had arranged with the herd owner, who lived in another city, to take a photograph of his herd bull for an *Angus Journal* Herd Reference Edition ad.

To make the story brief, the manager said that yes, the owner had called him about the photo session but that he had hay on the ground and was too busy to get the bull ready now. He asked the Regional Manager to come back and do it later. I don't know if the photo ever got taken or the ad produced, but given the manager's attitude, I doubt it.

Everyone knows the importance of getting hay up when it is ready. Although in irrigated, desert country, there wasn't much chance of rain. But assuming that rain was a sure thing, what would it have cost the manager to hire help for three or four hours to free him or someone else to get the bull ready for a photograph? At \$10 an hour, it would have been no more than \$40. A small price to pay for a photo taken at the farm, and small indeed compared with the Regional Manager's time and travel to get to the ranch for the appointment.

Obviously, the manager just wasn't concerned with the herd advertising program. Perhaps in the past, the owner had given him little responsibility for advertising and had placed greater emphasis on getting the hay up and doing other farm chores. The causes could be many; the result, no matter where it happens, is always the same. Through benign neglect the manager and the owner, and many like them, reduce the effectiveness their advertising investment-advertising that's crucial to the success of their registered cattle business.

Who cares if you don't?



Whatever the reason, many registered cattle breeders don't want to take responsibility for their advertising and merchandising programs. Instead, they turn it over, at least in their own minds, to someone else—a sales person, a publication advertising coordinator, or ad manager—anyone. Certainly if the person in question had felt it was his responsibility to see that the \$595 page of advertising in the *Angus Journal* was as effective as possible he would have found time to get the bull photo taken. And, he or she would have made sure that the Regional Manager knew exactly the message that the ad should convey to the potential customer.

Instead, he figured this work was the Regional Manager's responsibility, not his. That it was the salesperson's job to round up the production material and information and do the ad. The problem with this thinking is that the Regional Manager, two weeks before deadline, probably had

at least 30 ads to ride herd on. Talented though he and the *Journal* advertising staff are, they are neither brilliant idea factories nor mind readers. They don't know the herd's customer base or what the most important facts are that will interest potential buyers. And talented though they are, they can't generate 30 great advertising ideas each month, or even three for that matter. This ability is beyond that of even the millionaire advertising geniuses.

Conscientious and hard working as advertising people are at most good livestock publications, the thought must cross their mind now and then, with deadlines pressing down upon them, that if the advertiser doesn't really care, then why should I?

It's a legitimate question, and enough of a reason in itself, for the advertiser to take full responsibility for his or her herd advertising program.




Director of Communications
and Public Relations