

Never Use Two, When One Will Do

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do."

Apply this thought to every written piece, particularly livestock advertising, and there will be fewer bored people and a lot more good bulls and females marketed.

In fact, the idea applies to more than words. Almost every element in advertising, especially headlines, illustrations and copy, will benefit from the application of "never use two when one will do." As I write this I am looking at the ad of one of the top Angus advertisers and merchandisers. It has 20 lines of display type (headlines and sub-heads). It has seven illustrations. There are four separate copy blocks, and four reproductions of EPD information that could almost be considered illustrations. It is full of everything and yet conveys almost nothing to the reader, if indeed anyone would stop to read it.

What's interesting is that inside the same magazine is an ad partially paid for by the same advertiser that is much simpler, with fewer elements and more focus. It does a very respectable job of selling their product. The good ad is based upon a single idea which is carried through the entire ad. One large bull picture and one copy block make it inviting and easy to read and understand.

It is no wonder though that people think, speak, write and produce advertisements with so much clutter. We are bombarded daily by excess verbiage. Too much of it, maybe, in this magazine, and this column. But educators and bureaucrats lead the parade of wordiness. At an annual meeting of the Beef Improvement Federation some years back a noted industry leader told the group that the future would bring, "increasing levels of marketing by contractual integration." He meant that there would be more contract marketing.

Next time you set clown to design an ad, write advertising copy, or to review and edit what someone else has done for you, try this little exercise. Pretend that every word in your ad will cost you \$25 each; that every illustration or photograph beyond one will cost you an extra \$200 each and that a second or third copy block would cost \$150 each.

Assigning a cost to these elements will help you decide which words are worth the price, which ones deliver the desired impact, and which just take up space, slow down the reader and cost you mon-

ey. If you have to pay extra for that second copy block, will it be worth it, or could you combine your thoughts and sales points in one economically written block of copy? And what about taking the best illustration and making it large and dominant, instead of paying \$200 each to squeeze two or three more smaller ones into the ad.

These figures are arbitrary, but they illustrate the cost of advertising clutter in lost readership and lost effectiveness.

