

# Conquer Your Field Day Fears

by Barbara LaBarbara



ERLYN JOHNSON/PHOTOS

Powerful things happen when Angus breeders get together.

Cattle are bought and sold. Joint ventures are formed. New markets and opportunities are discovered.

At an Angus field day, breeders come face to face with other breeders, their neighbors, politicians who can affect their future, and news media representatives who can influence public opinion for or against the cattle industry. The opportunity for synergy is phenomenal.

Having a successful field day need not be difficult. All you need are a purpose and a plan.

It is not good enough to simply get together, slap each other on the back and brag about what a good job we are doing. People are too busy to attend an event that has no purpose.

## ***Define Your Objectives.***

Ask yourself if your field day objectives are to make new friends for the industry, attract commercial breeders to Angus cattle, raise money for an Angus youth activity, recognize individuals for their service to the cattle industry, or create good will within your community. It could be to form a catalyst for a planned attack on industry problems or to help lawmakers and the news media better understand the cattle industry.

If your field day has no real mission scrap the plan because it will fail.

## ***Identify your audience.***

Once you have defined your objectives and goals, identify your audience.

Develop a list of prospects and work up a group or individual profile. Besides people in your own organization your guest list could include commercial cattle producers, a local junior Angus or FFA association, Extension specialist, the president of the local Farm Bureau, Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, Forest Service and BLM personnel, Humane Society officials, or local politicians such as school board members, county commissioners and planning commission members. Members of these organizations could also be your guest speaker.

Tailor your event to accomplish your goals but also to suit the lifestyle and interests of those you invite. In the planning, involve people for whom the event is intended, such as the president of the Junior Angus Association, a commercial cattle producer or county commissioner.

Prepare packets containing information on VIPs attending. Make sure they are properly hosted. Give special attention to media and publication representatives.

## ***Understand your product.***

Decide which aspect of your industry you are going to promote. Is it better cattle for the commercial breeder? A healthy product grown in a clean and safe environment? Dollars and votes contributed to the local economy? A business where young people can succeed? Honest, hard working people producing a quality product? Have information on your group's interests and goals available. Remember, too much information can be counter-productive.

### **Break down the boredom barrier.**

There is always the classic beef BBQ at a field day. Try jazzing it up. Include Rocky Mountain Oysters, kabobs, short ribs, cheese or garlic bread— use your imagination. Above all promote the menu as "no rubber chicken served here."

Have junior Angus members act as hosts. Bring in a bluegrass or country band or local high school string quartet for entertainment. Have a working dog demonstration. Have a raffle or door prize and give away Angus beef or a steak dinner at a rancher's home. Videotape the day's activities and present it live before or after dinner. People love seeing themselves on television.



### **Make a checklist.**

Maybe you are thinking, "All of this sounds too complicated." Remember, you cannot do all of the suggestions above. Focus on one or two points and get started. Below is a simple checklist from the American Angus Association public relations department that will keep you on track.

#### **■ ADVANCE PLANNING**

(six months before the event)

- Enlist the help of a few members of your organization. Make each person responsible for a specific segment of the field day:
  - Program
  - Printing of invitations, programs, etc.
  - Refreshments and menus.
  - Publicity.
  - Budget.
  - Physical setup such as tents, BBQs, tables.
  - Make those appointments at the organizational meeting.

- Set a date and time for the field day.
- Define your objectives.
- Identify your audience.
- Decide on a tentative program.
- Contact previous hosts for their suggestions.
- Contact ranchers who may be willing to host the event at their ranch. If it is to be a tour, contact an appropriate number of breeders who would like to present their operation to visitors. Make sure they are operations that will leave a favorable impression.
- Prepare a budget. Income should include dollars and/or items expected from your organization, registration fees, support from local businesses or the American Angus Association. Expenses should include printing, postage, gifts, decorations, catering and facility charges, sound system, hotel and transportation costs for guests.

#### **1 Publicity And Program**

(five months before the event)

- Make a publicity plan. What will be appropriate? Invitations, public service announcements, new releases to ag publications and/or fliers to be placed in schools, county Extension office, feed stores, sale barns and mailed to members of your organization.
- Contact possible speakers and program participants.
- Arrange for awards and livestock needed for demonstrations, judging and weight guessing contests.
- Invite VIPs such as state and national association officers, politicians, government officials and news media people. (The publicity chairman could be in charge of this.)

#### **1 PROGRAM AND MEALS**

(four months before the event)

- Morning coffee break refreshments
- Lunch menu
- Afternoon drinks and snacks
- Dinner menu
- Choose a caterer. Confirm date and menus with caterer or persons donating refreshments.
- Make final decision on program, including speakers and use of cattle.
- Confirm dates and times with program participants.
- Confirm special transportation and accommodation needs.

#### **1 PUBLICITY**

(three months before the event)

- Send PSAs, news releases.
- Contact the American Angus Association to assist.
- Distribute flyers to sales barns and schools.
- Have invitations printed that include date, times, location, program, menus and special guests.

## 1 MORE PUBLICITY

(two months before the event)

- \_\_\_ Mail invitations.
- \_\_\_ Send follow up letters to VIPs.
- \_\_\_ Have name tags, programs, judging sheets, printed.
- \_\_\_ Make arrangements for physical items such as tents, tables, chairs, pencils, pads, decorations, BBQs.

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to accomplish your goals  
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## 1 Final Arrangements

(one month before the event)

- \_\_\_ Have a committee meeting. Go over the checklist. Make sure each person knows their responsibility and has or will complete it.
- \_\_\_ Mail post card reminders to all who were originally invited. Include two telephone numbers for RSVP.
- \_\_\_ Require RSVP two weeks to one month before the event, depending on the scope of the event.
- \_\_\_ Make a final confirmation with speakers, program participants and VIPs.
- \_\_\_ Finalize menu plans and head count with the caterer.

## 1 GRAND FINALE

(day of the event)

Have one person in charge of:

- \_\_\_ Setting up tables and chairs.
- \_\_\_ Decorating.
- \_\_\_ Helping caterer or arranging buffet tables.
- \_\_\_ Greeting guests and name tag distribution.
- \_\_\_ Distributing programs and directions (especially if more than one ranch is being visited).
- \_\_\_ Serving refreshments.
- \_\_\_ Judging contest, demonstrations, weight guessing contest.
- \_\_\_ Special games for the children.

- \_\_\_ Hosting specific VIPs. (Hosts should have information on their guest such as voting record, relationship to the cattle industry.)
- \_\_\_ The program – check sound system and other equipment being used. Speakers should not talk too long and should involve the audience in their presentation. Make sure VIPs get introduced.
- \_\_\_ Most importantly relax and enjoy!

A field day can speak loudly. It can be a turning point for your operation. The event will leave an impression.

Consider the story Eleanor Roosevelt once told about herself "I was taking a train tip and was in a pullman berth where the man above me just wouldn't stop snoring. Every time I was on the verge of sleep, he'd start snoring again, very loudly. I just couldn't get to sleep. I banged hard on the ceiling between the berths, but he wouldn't stop. Finally, the man poked his head out between the curtains and said, 'It ain't gonna do you no good lady – I saw you when you got on.'"

Many cattle breeders could put themselves in Mrs. Roosevelt's position. People they are trying to impress have already caught a glimpse of them, perhaps at a mismanaged field day that left a bad impression.

However, if you have a purpose and a plan, you will achieve the right impression and find your field day fears were unwarranted.