

# from the office

## LEAD IN

By Richard Spader  
Executive Vice President  
American Angus Association



Angus breeders who operate without a set of goals or an understanding of why they are breeding registered cattle in the first place will have a difficult time achieving success.

Goals may be quite varied. Yours may be to win shows, to win at bull test stations, to provide youth projects for your children, to shelter income, to be a gentleman farmer, to provide profit making bulls for the commercial industry, or any combination of these and many more.

No one set of goals fits the needs of all registered Angus breeders. As a result no one or no organization can or should attempt to dictate what an individual breeder's goals will be. But the American Angus Assn. can be of help by answering questions and offering unbiased opinions and observations. The staff of the American Angus Assn., including its regional managers and Association publication, can be a big help to any Angus breeder who wishes to establish a set of herd goals.

But the Association is not the only source of valuable information. Other purebred breeders, commercial cattlemen, feedlot operators, packers and other agribusiness people should all be used extensively. For example, if you intend to sell bulls to the commercial cattle breeders in your area, then a complete understanding of the needs of the commercial cowmen in your area is essential.

Whatever else, one goal should be to improve the breed. This means breeders should always be aware of the traits that make the Angus breed unique, and strive to preserve and improve on them. Nearly everyone agrees calving ease, and superior maternal and carcass traits head the list of factors that make Angus cattle so valuable to the industry. Surveys of commercial cattlemen, sponsored by the Association, have shown us these are the traits taken for granted from an animal with a black hide and a polled head.

Next, breeders should establish who their future customers will be. Are they commercial breeders, registered breeders, or both? Is it possible to develop a market for bulls and females and how many? In the end, a breeder must establish what the present and future needs will be for customers and develop a breeding program to meet that de-

mand. Some of the best time spent will be in visiting other herds. By studying other breeders and commercial operations, and visiting with agribusiness leaders and the staff of the Association, a future breeder can unravel some of the mystery of the business and begin to develop useful, attainable goals.

In today's Angus business, if you know what you want, you can find the sires and lines of cattle that will help you reach your goals fairly quickly. Performance records and national sire evaluation reports have identified superior cattle in the breed for various traits such as birth weight, calving ease, weaning weight, yearling weight and maternal values. The records are there—it's the breeder's responsibility to use them to improve his program and the breed.

Widespread use of A.I. allows for the use of top genetics in nearly every herd in the nation. The impact of open A.I. is more dramatic today than ever before. Moreover, breeders are using the option of embryo transplant to propagate the superior females in the breed. Now with the advent of frozen embryos and future sexing of embryos, even wider choices are available for herd and breed improvement.

Most importantly, I assume each herd has a goal to make a profit. Very few herds can stand the luxury of not showing a return on investment. Angus cattle offer more of a total package to the total industry than any other breed and have the best opportunity for a profitable investment. But profit is not insured even by the breeding of quality cattle. It takes a well-planned herd advertising and merchandising program for a herd to reach its profit potential.

And lastly, a breeder must constantly review his goals. This involves staying current with the industry by reading, observing and talking with fellow breeders. The most difficult task is sorting out what is fad and fancy and what is an actual trend in beef cattle breeding. Again, there's no simple answer but there are tools and programs available today that make it a lot simpler than it was even 10 years ago. So set reasonable goals for your herd, use the program available, don't lose sight of the commercial industry and continue to accentuate the strong traits of the Angus cattle. Do this and the Angus breed won't let you down. **AJ**