

# doing a better job

## MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Pick up a copy of any non-livestock magazine and compare the ads with the ones in this or any other livestock publication.

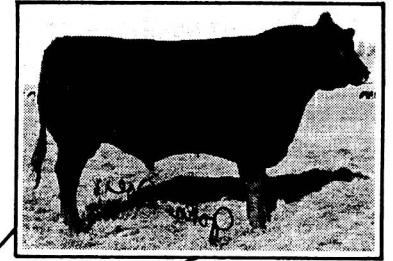
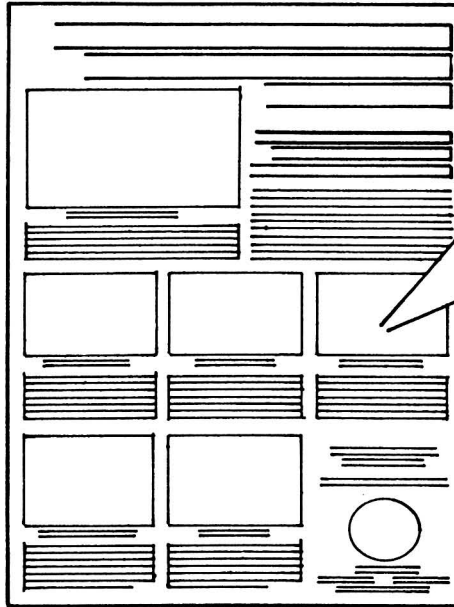
One of many differences you will see is that livestock advertisers often provide free advertising for the photographer taking their ad photographs. This consists of the photographer's name or logo prominently displayed, usually between the animal's legs, where it is virtually impossible to crop out without destroying the photograph.

In contrast the outstanding, creative photographs that illustrate the very best advertisements run by the richest corporations in the world carry no photographer credit lines. These advertisers, after they have paid the photographers' fees, feel no responsibility to help him or her advertise their photographic business. And neither should you.

No matter how much you might like your photographer, insist on an unaltered photograph. The reason is simple, anything written across the front of an advertisement illustration is distracting. Even worse, when you want to reverse the photo so the animal is facing the opposite direction in your ad, the photographer's name is printed in reverse. It sometimes is good for a chuckle, but you are buying advertising space to sell cattle, not entertain the reader.

This practice goes back a long way to the time when photographs were not reproduced in livestock publications. In those days artists were hired to make line drawings of outstanding cattle for advertising and editorial use, and these drawings, really artists' impressions carried the name of the artist. Later, when taking cattle photographs involved excavating a straw pit for the animal to stand in to make it look short and close to the ground, the photographer virtually reconstructed the photograph by retouching. About all that was unaltered in the original photo was the head. And the good retouchers always signed their photos, which were more like original drawings. Thank goodness we have become a lot more open in the way we breed cattle and present them to potential buyers in our ads.

Even so, we have too much similarity in cattle ad illustrations these days. Many advertisers seem to want numerous cattle pictures in their ads. Jamming five or six photos in a one-page ad isn't uncommon. And some are little bigger than postage stamps. In many other ads the individual photos look much alike, all taken from the same rear angle at ground level. These practices are hard to understand when one con-



siders the photo is supposed to be the most interesting, most unusual, most dramatic element in a good advertisement. The photo is largely responsible for making an ad different from all the others and for stopping the reader and making him or her want to find out more about what is being advertised.

Individual Angus ads should be imaginative and provoking. And this requires excellent illustrations. It might be a good idea for you to design an ad series, for example, that includes people, by illustrating some of the things you do in your business to insure the production of more productive cattle. Remember, the best ad illustrations show action, have human interest, look believable and make the reader want to learn more about what is going on in the photo. Photos of this type are hard to make and require a photographer with talent, imagination, patience and good photographic equipment.

On the other hand, if you are selling particular animals or the progeny of a particular animal, then you probably do need to show that animal in the ad. But there is no law that says you can only use a three-quarter rear angle shot from the ground level or below. A photo that emphasizes a bull's back leg and his underbelly isn't necessarily the best way to sell his services. A well-designed montage creating one large dominant illustration might generate more interest in the

animal than a conventional pose.

Just remember some animals are more impressive from one angle than another. The photo you use should emphasize the best features of the particular bull or cow you are selling, not make them look like all the other bulls or cows in the magazine.

Obtaining creative, dramatically posed photographs usually means hiring a professional. Once you have made this decision, sit down with the photographer and explain your needs. It would be best if you could show him or her layouts of ads the photos will be used in. Then provide enough time and help to allow the photographers' talent and imagination to come through. Also expect to pay for quality. Their rates may sound high, but tell me the last time you saw a wealthy livestock photographer.

And when you finally come up with just the right photo, insist it not have the photographer's name or logo printed on the front. If your photographer won't agree to this, then call someone else. Or, if you prefer, agree, as part of the compensation package, to put a photo credit line at the bottom of the ad. But don't let it be part of your ad illustration. You invest too much of your life and money in your herd and your advertising and promotion program to allow anything to take away from its effectiveness.

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