

A.I.—a Boon to Youth Projects

The widespread use of artificial insemination obviously has made a major impact on cattle production. This has affected the Angus business to no small extent, and members involved in our youth program have reacted in a very positive manner.

Countless small herds are established each year and new memberships are taken because a family decides to purchase Angus as a youth project for the children. And although we refer to them as youth projects, the decision to raise livestock is made by the entire family. Plans, efforts and responsibilities usually affect everyone in the family, and the pursuit of excellence by these families certainly affects the breed.

Artificial insemination has become the major tool allowing small youth project herds to produce outstanding calf crops. This has intensified demand for semen from outstanding bulls and has created tremendous market competition for semen of both progeny-tested sires and untested young bulls.

Breeding Privileges

Many heifers are selling with breeding privileges to outstanding bulls, and thanks to availability of semen and perfection of small-herd A.I., families can purchase these heifers anywhere in the country, then bring them home and breed them A.I. Because they don't have to return heifers to the point of purchase for breeding, it is no longer uncommon for youth project heifers to be purchased thousands of miles from home. And both buyers and sellers benefit.

Some additional effects of widespread use of A.I. include advertising, now often designed to interest owners of small herds. Semen is available from most herd sires and prices are advertised. Even in areas where sales are aimed at commercial cattle trade, production and consignment sales often feature an outstanding set of weaned or yearling show-quality heifers. As a result, young people and their families travel farther and have a wider selection of project heifers than ever.

For several years, the American Angus Assn. has sponsored shows providing bred-and-owned classes. Veteran junior show exhibitors indicate they have seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of those heifers. And our records show that entries in bred-and-owned classes at the National Junior



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Angus Heifer Show have doubled in the last five years.

Merchandising Benefits

The combined efforts of wider search for outstanding junior heifers and increased A.I. have resulted not only in more and higher quality junior bred-and-owned cattle, but juniors are in a stronger position to profit from merchandising their own products. Several state consignment sales have featured outstanding and high selling individuals bred by junior members.

Indeed, A.I. has affected the Angus business and in a similar way has affected junior members' goals, aspirations and management. Our young people have become more aware of the nutritional, health and environmental care necessary to guarantee them a high percent A.I. calf crop.

Junior members now can be more involved in sire selection. Performance records, progeny testing and performance pedigrees are becoming important to junior members.

Undoubtedly, young people are becoming more sophisticated, and A.I. has hastened their search for excellence in Angus production. 