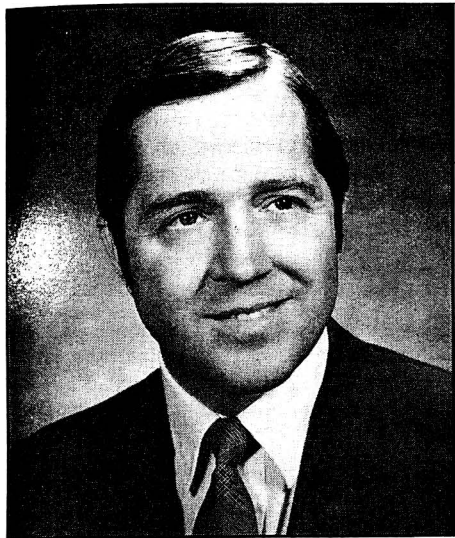


from the office

LEAD IN

by Dick Spader
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The number of U.S. farms increased by some 8,000 in 1981, the first recorded gain in 45 years.

Nine of the 11 most western states recorded increases in farm numbers according to the 1981 survey. There were also gains in such important farming states as Minnesota, Kansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Indiana, Kentucky, New York, Virginia, Georgia and Florida. States like Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska and Texas recorded no declines.

This reversal of a half-century trend signals an opportunity for increased Angus business, if Angus breeders and state and local Angus associations are willing to pursue it.

Most of the increase in farms was in the small, part-time variety. The families and owners of these operations offer a good market for registered Angus.

It is the dream of thousands of city dwellers to live in the country and raise their children on a farm. Many part-time farmers themselves grew up on farms and want to offer their children some of the same opportunities they enjoyed. These include, among other things, owning, caring for and exhibiting livestock, and belonging to farm youth organizations such as 4-H and FFA.

There is a good deal of competition among the various breeds and species of livestock for the attention of youthful owners. That is why it is important that we make a conscious effort to recruit them.

When part-time farmers move into a neighborhood, they usually respond strongest to the first people and organizations that they get involved with. Contacting these new people can be as simple as stopping by and inviting them to your local Angus association meeting or field day. If they have children, tell them about 4-H clubs or Angus heifer clubs in their area. Leave them a copy of the new "Star of Your Future" and offer to help in any way you can if they or their children have an interest in Angus cattle.

Some new owners of farmland are not quite sure what to do with it. If they move in the spring, they can find themselves with pasture and nothing to eat it. These people are good prospects for a few cows or heifers to eat down the pasture and provide a future beef supply. Since these new farmers usually have an income well above average, they should also be interested in the tax savings that cattle ownership can generate. Investment credit and rapid depreciation can greatly reduce the cost of

cattle ownership for these people, and surprisingly not many new rural residents are aware of these benefits.

Because many cattle owners are employed full-time off the farm, and away from the cattle much of the day, the traditional Angus advantages of ease of calving, no cancer eye and no dehorning are extremely important. And these very likely are traits that the inexperienced farmer may never have thought of.

Raising one's own food is another idea, along with "organic" production, that is appealing to more and more part-time farm people. The ability of Angus cattle to marble early and produce high quality beef on a minimum amount of feed is a real benefit to many part-time farmers. And there is no need for an Angus steer to be fed anything but the most organic of feed, if that is what the owner desires.

If the new part-time farmer in the neighborhood owns cattle, there is even more reason for you and your Angus association to court him. If he has commercial cattle, he may still be a good customer for registered heifers for his children. Also, he will need a new bull every two or three years, regardless of the size of his cow herd. So contact him early. Invite him and his family to cattlemen's and Angus association meetings. Get his children acquainted with active youth organizations and do all that you can to encourage the person to expand his or her cattle operation.

Over the years, the biggest decline in American Angus Assn. participation has been in the group of members who register 10 or fewer head of cattle. Part of this can be attributed to the decline in small farm numbers; some as a result of the economy, and some because at times we have made it appear that if a cattle producer is not a large, serious seed stock producer, using AHIR records and making a contribution to the Angus genetic pool, that there was little reason to own registered Angus cattle.

This, of course, is not the case. There are many valid reasons for owning registered Angus cattle other than to produce herd bulls or bulls for commercial customers. If we all work together, we can recapture some of this lost market and at the same time take advantage of the new, small, part-time farmers to boost demand for Angus cattle and stimulate participation in national, state and local Angus association activities. 