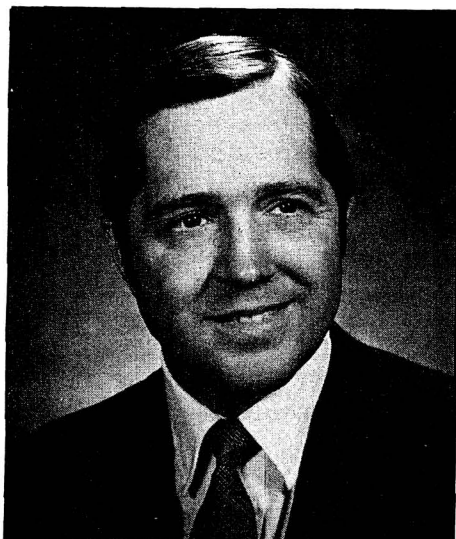


from the office

LEAD IN

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Marlow, a medieval knight rode his horse across the castle drawbridge late one afternoon. He was battered, bloody and nearly exhausted.

"My good man," called the King from his balcony, "what has happened to you?"

"Sir," Marlow replied, "I have been laboring in your service, robbing, burning homes and pillaging your enemies in the West."

"But I have no enemies in the West," shouted the King.

"Well, Sir," said the confused knight, "I think you do now."

Without his lifting a hand, the King's image had been dramatically changed.

Registered cattle breeders today also have an image problem, particularly among many commercial cow-calf producers. The problem affects us all, even though we, like the King, have done little or nothing to create it.

This year the American Angus Assn. studied the attitudes of commercial cattle pro-

ducers from all over the country. The results will be used to plan national advertising and promotion campaigns. A single inquiry in the long interview sessions asks, "Do you generally trust registered cattle breeders?" It nearly always set off a titter of laughter, followed by stories that none of us in the business like to hear.

For example, a few commercial producers responded that not all breeders are completely honest with the information about their cattle including age, pedigree and breed makeup. Some don't believe all the advertising claims by individuals as being realistic for the breed or the environment where cattle are produced.

Other cattlemen are not sure that breeders report the correct sire of all calves. There are those, they believe, who will list their most popular bull as the sire of the best calves, regardless of the actual parentage.

Obviously, anyone who expresses these kinds of doubts about Angus aren't aware that the American Angus Assn. has a blood typing program for breed and parentage verification that detects these irregularities. The Association, for example, far exceeds other beef breeds in blood typing and typed over 4,800 head of Angus in fiscal 1983.

On the positive side, commercial cowmen generally trust beef cattle performance records. But at one session we heard stories of breeders (in this case breeders of exotic cattle) who induce early labor to keep birth weights down.

Now keep in mind two things. First, these opinions weren't directed just against Angus breeders. The people being interviewed didn't even know that the sponsor of the research was a breed organization, let alone the Angus Association. And second, they don't think all registered breeders participate in these kinds of practices. However, all breeders seem to be suspect until proven otherwise.

The few "knights of the registered beef cattle kingdom" who engage in the modern business version of robbing, burning and pillaging hurts us all.

Part of the problem, too, is that as individual breeders we don't take an active enough role in selling ourselves, the Angus

breed and the American Angus Assn. on a one-to-one basis. Here are four suggestions on how responsible registered Angus breeders might improve not only their image but the overall image of the registered Angus business.

1. Get to know the people you do business with and help them get to know you. Individuals trust people they know and respect and, in general, this respect will carry over to the Angus business. At times the registered business appears to be ingrown. We tend to talk and associate too much with each other instead of our potential customers.

2. Make sure your customers and potential customers know that the American Angus Assn. has programs to help insure the accuracy of records. With blood typing, for example, we can check parentage and breed makeup with great accuracy. If the subject ever comes up, explain how these programs work. You can bring these facts out as you explain your guarantee program.

3. Be willing to promote yourself and what you do and how you do it. People believe what they see and hear, and they need to see and hear a lot more from the honest, serious cattle producers that compose 99 percent or more of the American Angus Assn. membership.

4. Be proud of your American Angus Assn. and its accomplishments and the role you play as an active member. These research results also prove that the American Angus Assn. is viewed by the commercial cattle industry as having done more to improve the breed it represents than any other association. Take advantage of this.

Most farmers and ranchers, experts tell us, are "reactive." They feel that their success is determined by outside forces and they act accordingly. However, the most successful farmers and ranchers are goal oriented. They concentrate on affecting those things they can change. They set goals and try to make things happen.

Image problems will respond to just such a positive effort. We do not have to live with an image created by the misinformed, misguided knights of the registered cattle industry. **AJ**