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## Now Is Time To Respond To Market



*C. K. Allen*

Cattle prices are not too high and I think it is possible that they will move higher. During this period Angus breeders have a great opportunity to respond to the favorable market and the fact that prices will probably hold up for at least five years. Breeders can use the opportunity to make changes in their programs and facilities that will affect their production and efficiency for years.

There has been some herd expansion but it is not significant yet. The headlines of potential boycott and concern about high prices may make some leery of the future. Some may decide that long range profit is too questionable for them to make the substantial investment that increased production now requires. This and anything else that slows down herd expansion such as high interest rates, high cattle prices and consumer backlash will prolong the low cattle

numbers and, therefore, maintain profitable prices for a longer period of time.

It is very seldom that producers have an opportunity to plan for profitable returns over an extended period of time. This situation may provide you with the revenue to improve your facilities or bring in genetic material that will stand you in good stead in the future.

The Angus breed is on the leading edge of increased demand for breeding cattle and for some very sound reasons, too. First of all, some producers did not appreciate the 80 or 90 per cent calf crop they had with the British breeds until they tried some of the larger Continental breeds and experienced 50 to 70 per cent calf crops. This brought home quickly the need for calving ease, maternal influence and the superior quality of Angus cattle. It is a fact that 70 per cent of the cost of raising a slaughter animal is invested at weaning. This 70 per cent includes the cost of maintaining the cow herd, the herd

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## **TIMELY TOPICS**

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bull battery, replacement heifers, and so forth. Therefore, we can make the most improvement in efficiency in traits associated with performance prior to weaning of the calf.

Angus excel all other breeds in this pre-weaning period. Angus are the most efficient breed. Further, they produce the highest quality beef. It only seems reasonable that when you can combine the most efficient with the best quality you are in a very good position for years to come.

One word of caution: let's don't kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Commercial cattlemen do not purchase Angus to increase the size of the cows in their cow herd. They want Angus for calving ease, maternal ability and efficient production. We certainly need to increase the size of some of the smaller cattle. Much progress has already been made in size increasing, but let's don't get carried away and try to model Angus after breeds that won't work at the commercial level, and are not accepted by the commercial industry.

Keep in mind as we go through the next few years that sooner or later

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cattle numbers will increase in response to higher prices, and that we will again find ourselves in a reduction phase in which cattle prices for the average producer will be unprofitable. Some breeders made money in the last four years and I think it is important for all Angus breeders to evaluate why and how. There certainly were varied reasons but I think all of the operations that have been successful during the most difficult part of the beef cycle were offering genetic merit, a successful image, a spotless reputation and were efficient in their production.

Current favorable prices offer you an opportunity to develop your program, improve your facilities, stand behind your cattle and offer a value commensurate with prices received. I am confident that if you build an outstanding reputation and have good cattle you will always have more customers than you have cattle. In the cattle business that means profit. 