

The Web Page

by Angie Stump Denton, director of Web marketing



Why do I need a Web site?

It's almost football season, my favorite time of year. There's nothing better than watching the Kansas State Wildcats trounce their opponent. Another football event I eagerly anticipate is the Super Bowl — not necessarily to watch the game, but to see the new commercials.

As I watched this year, I was amazed at how many commercials were promoting Internet companies or at least advertising a company's Web address.

You see the same phenomenon as you drive down the road. Billboards along every busy highway are promoting Web addresses.

E-commerce is the sales medium of the future. Forrester Research forecasts business-to-consumer trade via the Internet will rise from \$8 billion in 1998 to \$108 billion by 2003. By 2004, it is estimated that agricultural trade alone on the Internet will be a trillion-dollar market.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reports the number of farmers with Internet access more than doubled between 1997 and 1999 — from 13% to 29%. The results of a recent *Angus Journal* brainstorming survey were astonishing. Of the 557 Angus breeders who responded, 92% had a computer and 87% had access to the Internet.

This trend is spurring many producers to consider whether they should develop a Web site for their farm or ranch. Two questions to consider before doing so are: What is the vision of your operation in the 21st century? How will the Internet help achieve those goals?

Using the Internet as a business tool is a smart move in today's fast-paced beef industry.

Developing your farm's or ranch's presence on the Internet gives you the opportunity to market cattle, semen, embryos, private-treaty offerings and other agricultural products worldwide. You also can keep current and potential customers up-to-date on changes involving your operation, such as sale dates, private-treaty offerings, show results or bull-test results.

Other reasons for developing a Web site for your farm or ranch include:

1. To attract new customers

When you develop a Web site, you are expanding your marketing potential exponentially. You create the opportunity to reach potential customers down the road, in the next county, in a neighboring state or anywhere in the world.

Establishing a "history" or "about us" page allows potential customers to find out more about your breeding program, to see if it matches what they are wanting from a seedstock source.

2. To promote cattle, semen or embryos for sale

With a good Web site that is easy to navigate, updated regularly, promoted and full of the information for which browsers are hungry, it is easy to get a return on your investment. With a well-constructed site, browsers will be drawn to your offerings and e-mail you for more information, or better yet, order semen on the herd sire you are currently promoting.

One of the best features of the Internet is the rapid transmission of information. If you decide to have a production sale today, by tomorrow the date can be advertised on the Web. However, if you want to have it printed in a magazine, it could take two months before a potential customer would see your ad.

3. To serve customers

With your Web site, you also can help your customers. For instance, you can keep them up-to-date on bull performance or post a searchable online sale book to your site. This would allow customers to search more quickly and more accurately for the animals that meet their criteria for expected progeny differences (EPDs).

You also can set up a "for sale" page that lists cattle you have for sale — replacement heifers or feeder cattle.

4. To complement your marketing program

A good Web site is a great marketing tool that will complement other advertising vehicles, such as print advertising, ranch brochures and radio spots. A great way to drive traffic to your site is to promote your Web address on printed materials — ads, business cards, brochures, etc.

The goal for your Web site should be to turn browsers into buyers. You want to provide just enough information so they will keep coming back. I believe in the analogy that the Internet is not a "field of dreams." Building a site does not mean browsers will come. You must work hard to market your site.

Angus Productions Inc.'s (API's) Web Marketing Department is currently helping Angus breeders, associations, feedlots and other related industries build a presence on the Internet.

Producers can choose from three Web-site design packages or request a custom site. If they already have a Web site, the *Angus Journal* can host that site.

We've developed nine templates for different page topics, allowing a variety of page combinations. Each page's functionality is set up with the user in mind. Navigation from page to page within the Web site has been made easy and logical. We also can build a custom site to fit individual needs.

For more information about services provided by the Web Marketing Department visit www.angusjournal.com and click on the Web Marketing link or call 1-800-821-5478.

Next month we'll introduce the new Angus e-classified site.

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