

MERCHANDISING



YOU . . . The most important element in your merchandising plan



like you can be even more important than the advertising you do. Not that advertising is unimportant. The Dodge dealer mentioned above also has the best advertising program of all the area car dealers. He also advertises in St. Joseph where he is not so well known personally and picks up a healthy chunk of business.

But if the so-called farm crisis is forcing you to reduce expenses, then whatever you do, don't cut back on your personal involvement, your visibility, or your service to customers.

The American and Texas Angus Associations recently sponsored an Angus merchandising seminar in Texas. A point that all the speakers stressed, was the need to put a lot of yourself into your sales effort. What does this mean? Well, here are a few examples.

1. At least once each year make a personal call upon the people who influence buying decisions of your customers or potential customers. They include livestock extension specialists, county agents, bankers and other farm lenders, 4-H leaders, elevator operators, and feed dealers. Make an appointment with them, explain your operation briefly and leave behind one of your brochures, business cards, or a copy of one of your ads.

2. Involve the vocational agriculture (FFA) chapters and classes in your market area in your operation. Invite the instructor and his class out to weigh cattle, to judge or go over your performance records. One breeder I know sponsors a judging contest each year. It attracts teams from a wide area, and he eventually sells cattle to many students and their parents.

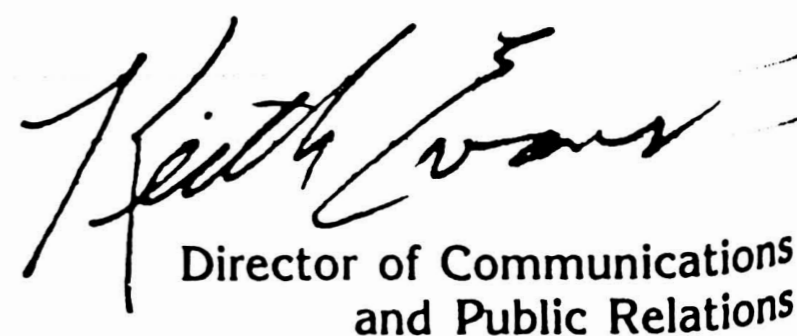
3. Make sales calls on potential customers. Do just two a month and at the end of the year, 24 potential

customers that you have never talked to before will know you, will have information about your herd, and will be inclined to pay more attention to your advertising and promotion, and some will eventually buy from you.

4. Make followup visits and/or telephone calls to every customer, every year. Find out if what they bought from you is living up to their expectations. Good customers aren't likely to complain if they have a problem, at least not in the early stages and not to you. A call allows you to spot problems early and solve them long before they become big problems. Or herd visits enable you to see how your cattle perform in another herd, plus your interest flatters the buyer. If something is wrong, it's better for the customer to tell you rather than a friend or neighbor who might be influenced not to buy from you.

5. Surely you are a member of your state and local cattlemen's association. If you aren't, join this week. You must be involved in these organizations for several reasons. First, you need the visibility. Second, you need the members as a source of new customers. Third, your help is needed. Volunteer to help with some important project in your state, local, or national cattlemen's association.

Merchandising any product successfully requires a long term commitment. Your personal involvement in a planned public relations program is one of the really effective, cost efficient sales tools you have at your disposal.


Director of Communications
and Public Relations

Selling registered Angus cattle is a personal business—the better your customers respect you, the more they stick with you. Commercial cattle producers tell us, time after time, that they almost always buy bulls from someone they know, trust, and like to do business with.

The seller, as an individual, often has tremendous influence on the buyer. Most of you have experienced this in one way or another. For example, in a Northwest Missouri town, not far from St. Joseph, is a well-established Dodge dealer with an impeccable reputation for service and fairness. The owner is also likable and active in the community. As a result, when farmers gather at the local coffee shop, Dodge pickups predominate in the parking lot even though both Chevrolet and Ford pickups outsell Dodge nationally.

When it comes to selling registered Angus cattle, your reputation, your visibility, and whether or not people