

## A \$6 Marketing Mistake That Can Cost You Hundreds

I can't help but wonder, now and then, what motivates people.

I was struck by an intense attack of wonderment the other day when we received in this office a note from a well respected state livestock extension specialist. The note was attached to the catalog for an adjoining state cattlemen association's performance selected bull sale. The event was co-sponsored by the state university. The note, edited slightly read:

"I did not realize that the — Cattlemen's Association and — State University allowed so many unregistered bulls in their bull sales. I thought you and the (U.S. Beef) Breeds Council might be interested. I would think that a pedigree is basic to performance evaluation."

Yes, one would think so, but half the Angus consignors in this catalog did not and few bulls of some other breeds came with performance registration certificates. There was a time when unregistered bulls would not be used by a serious commercial cattle breeder. But times change. Even some so-called experts in the not too distant past have advocated using crossbred bulls in certain situations, though that nonsense seems to have passed.

But there remains that group of registered cattle breeders who get their performance records processed at below-cost prices then don't register the cattle that they sell to commercial producers. In the Angus breed that is a savings of at least \$6 per head. And the unregistered bulls in this particular state performance sale didn't sell too badly - they averaged \$1,295.

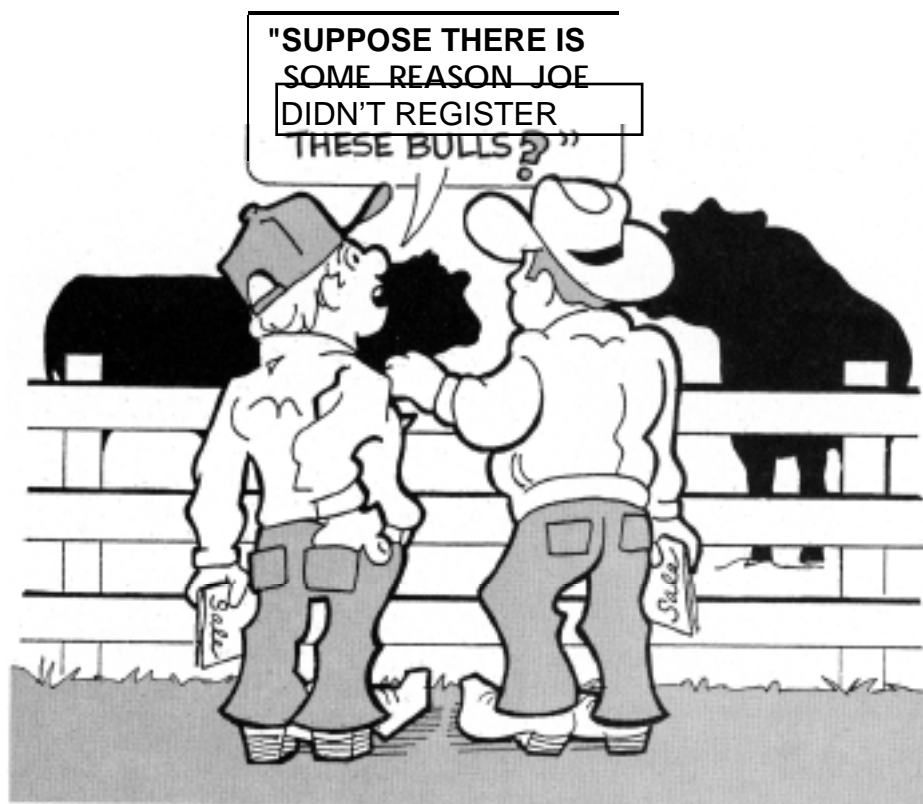
The registered bulls, however, averaged \$1,685. That's \$390 more per head than the bulls without the \$6 registration papers. But, some will argue, it's likely the registered cattle had better pedigrees and better performance records than the unregistered bulls. Here again, the facts don't support the prejudice.

In the sale were two nearly identical Angus bulls, judging from their records and pedigrees. The main difference was

that one had a registration certificate and the other didn't. The registered bull had an 80-pound birth weight, a 2.90 pound weight per day of age, and an off-test weight of 1,078 pounds. The grade bull had a 76-pound birth weight, a 3.01 pound weight per day of age, and an off-

First off, an unregistered bull has a limited market. Many commercial cattle producers will not consider buying and using an unregistered bull, and no registered Angus breeders will.

The lack of a registration certificate also sends a negative message. The poten-



test weight of 1,078 pounds. Both were sired by currently popular bulls and out of cows by similar bulls.

The difference between the two, though it slightly favored the unregistered bull, wasn't enough to quibble about. However the registered bull sold for \$1,650 while the bull without papers brought \$1,150. The difference in price between those two would have paid to register 83 bull calves.

Why the difference between these two genetically similar bulls? As we have discussed in this column before, a lot more goes into determining the price of a bull than his genetics.

tial buyer sees a seller who is in the registered Angus seedstock business, who doesn't think enough of his product to register it with the American Angus Assn. In the back of the buyer's mind hangs that nagging question, "Suppose there is some reason he can't register them?"

Whatever the reason, the impression made on potential customers by unregistered produce is negative - a negative \$400 to \$500 in this particular case. Competition in the bull business is just too tough to try to save money on a \$6 registration certificate.