

MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

Try A "Shot" of Advertising

Some Angus breeders I work with would rather take a beating than put an advertisement together," a regional manager said recently. "One man told me that he doesn't like to spend money on anything he can't carry home in his hands."

This doesn't surprise me. Over the years I've seen people go to great lengths to avoid ad planning or promoting their herds. In the last year an Angus breeder even turned down the offer to have a feature story written about their operation for the Herd Reference issue of the *Angus Journal*.

I was with a regional manager a few years back when he telephoned a breeder to say he was in town for his appointment to take a photograph of the breeder's bull for an *Angus Journal* advertisement. The breeder said, "sorry, we're making hay, and can't stop." As far as I know that photo never got taken.

I'm guilty too. There are times when I can find numerous petty jobs to do instead of writing an ad or making arrangements to do advertising work. The thing about it is you can put these jobs off all day, or all week or maybe all month and it makes no obvious difference to your business or your life. Things go on much as before, and you haven't had to put yourself through the mental exercise required to develop a good advertisement or advertising program.

What about the guy who only spends money for things he can carry home in his hands? That sounds practical, but it is inconsistent at the very least. The man probably spends hundreds of dollars on pharmaceuticals of one sort or another. True, he can carry them home in his hands, maybe even in his shirt pocket. But what does he do with all that expensive medicine? He injects it into a cow or calf, and most times it has no more effect upon his business than if he poured it down the drain. If he didn't vaccinate, the animals probably wouldn't get the disease anyway. But he does it religiously. Why?

The breeder who invests in a good herd health program buys two things: The first is peace of mind. He knows that if an animal looks a little sickly he won't have to worry about an impending epidemic. Second, he buys insurance against economic loss. He knows that an unprotected herd is eventually likely to get sick, and the economic loss is unacceptable.

I will never forget a lesson I learned from my father. In the

mid-1950s in northwest Missouri times were a little tough. There was both dry weather and low prices. My parents had an 80-acre farm, and they were putting two boys through college. Hogs paid a lot of our bills and one of those summers Dad decided that it was just too costly to vaccinate for hog cholera. So he didn't. When the pigs weighed 170 pounds or so a few of them developed some disconcerting symptoms. What if it was cholera?

Dad called the vet, although he knew that if it was cholera nothing could be done to save the pigs. All would die.

That whole day Dad hung around the house and barn, now and then going to look at the hogs and worrying himself sick. Finally, late in the day the vet arrived. There was nothing wrong with the hogs. They survived without cholera vaccinations. What's more the next pig crop probably would have too. However, we never flirted with that possibility again at our farm.

If it helps, compare advertising investment with health care. Develop a good advertising and marketing program and you can approach sale time with much more peace of mind. You'll know that you have covered all the advertising and promotion bases properly. Also, you have made a

sound investment that should pay off in more sales and better prices. Advertising alone doesn't guarantee top prices and strong demand, but like immunization it is good insurance against disaster.

So set aside a time every year to plan your advertising program. Decide what publications you will advertise in, and when, and what message you want to convey to the readers. Then when a regional manager calls about a Herd Reference Edition ad you'll know, at least roughly, what you want to do and what you want to say.

With a plan it will be a heck of a lot easier to put together an ad than take a beating. And this ad, combined with the other ads and elements of your marketing program, will help ensure against a sales drought.



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