

# Setting the PACE

by Susan Rhode, director of communications and public relations



## The power of a LETTER

I arrived at the office one morning to find a fax on my desk from Tina Paris, an Association member from Cherryville, Mo. Her fax contained an editorial cartoon and a letter to the editor of the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* that read:

### Unhealthy meat

After reading the July 16 news article on meat-inspection rules, many will be justifiably concerned by reclassifying as safe the meat from carcasses with cancers and sores. However, even prior to this change in policy, eating meat was far from safe.

The reason so many animals are so sick by the time they reach the slaughterhouse is that they are raised in horrendous conditions on factory farms. To prevent the spread of disease in overcrowded conditions, animals are often pumped full of antibiotics.

Many pigs, chickens, turkeys and cows live their entire lives indoors, never seeing the sunlight until they are transported to slaughter, where they are sometimes killed while fully conscious.

We cannot rely on the government to mandate reasonable protections for animal treatment, and we certainly shouldn't rely on government inspections of animal carcasses after slaughter.

As consumers, we must use our purchasing power to support producers of healthy, humane vegetarian food. And remember: The only way to be certain that the meat you've purchased won't make you and your family sick is to throw it away.

Bernie Fischlowitz-Roberts  
Clayton, Mo.

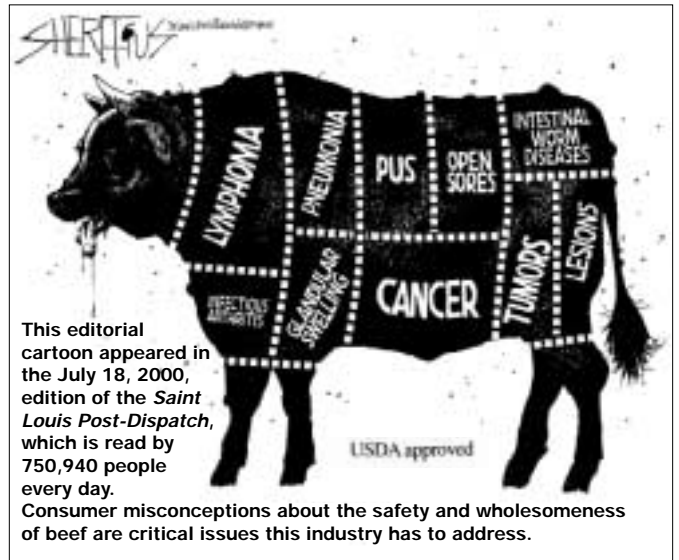
Needless to say, as a cattle producer and promoter of beef, this letter infuriated me. How dare this person go spreading opinions that aren't accurate or credible to the 750,940 readers of the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*!?

Many Angus breeders probably don't read a large metropolitan newspaper often enough to know how serious the consumer-awareness issues of the beef industry truly are. Misinformed consumers are our biggest limiting factor to increasing demand for beef and our biggest challenge in improving the image of agriculture, and more specifically, beef production. What's more, the only thing worse than a misinformed consumer is one who broadcasts those opinions to the world via mass media, like Bernie did.

It didn't take me long to sit down at my computer and to crank out a rebuttal to the editor of the *Post-Dispatch*. I e-mailed it back across the state later that day hoping they would publish my views in their entirety the following day, offering beef producers nationwide a small, but proud, victory.

### Proactive, NOT REACTIVE

My letter to the editor was the best we could do in this particular situation, but it's just a bandage on the huge, open flesh wound of consumer misconception this industry has to address. Before readers in Saint Louis finished their morning coffee, the damage had been



done. We have to find ways to change anti-beef opinions of vocal consumers before their letters get printed.

These efforts start with your spreading the positive message about agriculture and the safety and nutritional benefits of beef to consumers in your local area. It's amazing how much power one letter can have, especially when it's YOUR positive and proactive letter spreading the good news about beef.

Now that I've made my point, tear this page out and burn it before some unsuspecting, innocent consumer comes across your *Angus Journal* and reads Bernie's letter. And thanks, Tina, for helping us set the PACE!

### Changing for the BETTER

You may have noticed that with this issue of the *Angus Journal*, this column is no longer written by Susan Waters. It's now written by Susan Rhode. My marriage to Jeff Rhode on Aug. 26 not only has changed my life forever but also has changed my name. Please note the update to my e-mail address, too.

*Susan Rhode*

e-mail: [srhode@angus.org](mailto:srhode@angus.org)

### The Last WORD...

A lady came up to me on the street and pointed at my suede jacket. "You know a cow was murdered for that jacket?" she sneered. I replied in a psychotic tone, "I didn't know there were any witnesses. Now I'll have to kill you, too."

—Anonymous