

The Power of the Paper

Anticipate customer needs by transferring ownership.

by Miranda Reiman, senior associate editor

“Do you want the papers?”

It’s an uncomplicated question, often asked in haste at the end of a busy sale day. A simple “yes” or “no” would do, but what lies in the difference between those two answers can affect opportunities and profitability for the commercial cattlemen who reply.

“Probably the most common reason that bull buyers don’t get their registration paper is that they don’t know to ask,” says Jerry Cassidy, director of member services for the American Angus Association.

That’s worth repeating: It’s not the cost (as little as \$5 per head for the seller, if done within the first 30 days of the sale) or the hassle (it only takes a few swipes of the pen or strokes of the keyboard).

They simply don’t know the value.

Letting customers know that it’s more than just a piece of paper.

“It really is about good customer service,” Cassidy says.

Today, the Association registers nearly 300,000 animals per year, and transfers around 160,000.

“That is a solid percentage, knowing just over half of those transferred represent bull sales. However, the commercial cow-calf industry has become more information-savvy and familiar with

today’s technology,” he says. “Each year they expect more from their seedstock supplier.”

Opportunities ahead

Call it a key, a welcome mat, or puzzle piece, but the registration paper is needed to engage in

many of the value-added marketing options, says regional manager Levi Landers, who serves in Nebraska and Colorado.

“It opens the door to AngusLinkSM and everything

the American Angus Association can provide,” he says. “At the time of sale is the best time to get the papers transferred, so they don’t have to call back in two years.”

It’s not uncommon for Landers’ fellow staff members to scramble in the final hour to get registrations caught up because of date-related external pressure.

“They’re trying to meet a [sale book] deadline for a video sale, and it holds up the whole process,” Landers says. “With the premiums that we’re getting through AngusVerified, NHTC (non-hormone treated

cattle) and everything else, it’s pretty important to have the papers transferred.”

Nobody wants to be the reason a customer misses their chance at a bonus.

If a cattleman calls asking for help with an AngusLink enrollment, that’s often when they discover bulls that never got properly transferred. Then the commercial programs department works closely with member services to come to a solution.

“Typically what has happened in almost every case is that the buyer didn’t really know they needed the paper transferred, so they didn’t ask,” Cassidy says.

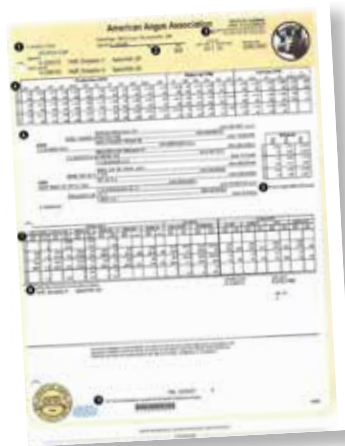
The breeder gets a phone call from an 816 area code, and it often ends in a bull being reinstated to the ranch’s inventory so they can then transfer ownership.

“They’ve been extremely cooperative,” Cassidy says.

Yet, it’s an unnecessary step that results in extra costs, too, he notes. In that scenario, the bull buyer pays \$5 for a duplicate paper to reinstate, and the seller pays \$12 to transfer for anything beyond 60 days from the date of sale.

No request needed

Zane and Barb Leininger raise around 400 commercial Angus cows near La Junta, Colo., and appreciate when the registration automatically



comes in the mail. They notice when it doesn't.

They've retained ownership through the feeding phase lately and don't use the papers for any current marketing programs, but the couple still makes certain to get it with every Angus bull they buy.

"It's a good idea to have them just in case," Zane says. "Right now we don't need it, but that could change, too."

The more you know

Even if cattlemen never enroll in a program, there is power in data. The Leiningers use the website to check genetic predictions that update weekly.

"We'll look at those every year when we put out bulls," Barb says.

Today they pay special attention to changes in calving ease but also plan to watch foot score as they fit cattle to their western range environment.

"They're kind of on their own," Barb says of the mature cows during calving season.

It takes accurate data to create cattle that work in an area with an average rainfall of 11 inches and in a High Plains feedyard, too. That's why they study sale books, poring over them from top to bottom.

"When we get to a bull sale, we're very educated, versus if you just go

buy some bulls from some guy," Barb says. Without that data she says, "you don't know if you're really buying the right bull."

The registration paper gives them assurance because of the combination of genomic information and the breadth of the Angus data that back up the expected progeny differences (EPDs), they say.

"It's a much more valuable document today than it was years and years ago, when it just documented ancestry — and that is still a big deal, don't get me wrong," Cassidy says. But with

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regular updates and the advent of DNA technology, “It’s not just your grandpa’s ancestors anymore.”

Transferring bulls might feel like more paperwork for a breeder, but it makes other tasks simpler later, says Kelli Retallick-Riley, president of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI).

Take genetic recommendations, for example. Behind AAA Login, there’s the opportunity to track bull sales and export results, so breeders can see which bulls sold to specific customers and when.

“This can help with suggesting EPDs, but also for repeat customers to make sure the buyer isn’t doubling up on too many maternal lines,” Retallick-Riley says.

There is power in the data.

Papers, please

When Landers does AngusLink reviews, he sees another, less-talked-about benefit of the papers.

Cattlemen pull out three-ring binders, with plastic page protectors carefully guarding the thick paper copies.

“Some of them have every bull they’ve ever bought, and they go back and look at them,” he says. “There’s a lot of pride in having those papers.”

Ranchers inherently want to produce the best, and that’s what the Leiningers are trying to do with their Angus cattle.

“They’re what everybody wants,” Zane says. “I think it’s the best carcass

Excuse buster

“The process of transferring ownership is quick, easy and inexpensive,” says Jerry Cassady, American Angus Association director of member services.

Quick: When submitted correctly, a transfer paper is turned around in the Association office the next day.

Easy: On a bull, the seller simply signs the form, and includes the name and address of the new owner.

Inexpensive: There’s a \$5/head charge to the seller within 30 days of sale, then it increases to \$7/head until 60 days, and anything after that is \$12/head.

breed top to bottom, the best calving ease top to bottom, and good docility. There’s a good reason why most of the cattle are Angus anymore, because that’s what everybody wants.”

If the commercial producer knows the weight of a “yes,” he’ll have the papers to prove it, too. **AJ**

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