

# MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

## Look for Positives in Advertising Program

If your operation isn't large enough to justify advertising in the *Angus Journal* does this mean you can't compete with Angus breeders who do?

Some people think so. A reader, responding to the Seedstock Selection Survey in the *Journal*, recently wrote, "I've got as much quality (in my cow herd) as your advertisers, but can't afford to advertise in the *Journal*." Concerning the advertising in the *Journal* he said, "I'm tired of the hype."

In general he seemed to feel that *Journal* advertisers have an edge on him which he is unable to overcome. He's not alone. I've talked with other people over the years who share some of these same views.

They are in sharp contrast, however, with another small breeder who responded to the same Seedstock Selection Survey. He wrote: "Our bull customers are primarily commercial cattlemen running crossbred cows. Our bulls sell either by word of mouth or at a consignment sale for Angus bulls."

The breeder continued, "We sell show heifers through county agents, ag teachers or by word of mouth. I keep our heifer prices (reasonable) so that 4-H and FFA kids can afford them. Putting those heifers out in the ring is some of the best advertisement you can have."

"We have found that our most effective advertising is (media) within 100 miles from home... in regional publications." He concluded, "We appreciate the opportunity you are giving the small Angus breeder to impact the *Journal*."

What is the difference between these two Angus breeders? One defensive and overwhelmed when he reads the *Angus Journal*, the other positive and appreciative. One difference, it seems to me, is that the positive small breeder seems to understand advertising and how it works, while the other doesn't.

In general there are no good or bad publications to advertise in for Angus breeders. There are, however, effective and ineffective media for individual Angus breeders. It depends entirely upon the kind of customer a breeder wants to attract and the individual breeder's defined market area.

For example, a breeder with an \$1,800 advertising budget, who markets everything within a 50-mile radius of the farm would gain little from using the entire ad budget to place two one-page ads in the *Angus Journal*. The chances of reaching a high percentage of that breeder's potential commercial customers and 4-H and FFA buyers within the defined market

area would be small. On the other hand, a breeder whose goal is to market registered females, herd bulls or semen to other registered cattle breeders needs the *Angus Journal*.

Remember, the objective of an advertising program should be to establish top-of-mind awareness in a large majority of potential customers within a defined market area. When potential customers need bulls, for example, the advertiser wants them to think of his or her operation first and favorably.

How top-of-mind awareness is achieved isn't important. Very small breeders might be able to do it through word of mouth. It may be possible for them to talk with and influence

enough potential customers to sell all their stock at profitable prices.

A breeder who markets regionally or nationally to many registered Angus breeders would never be able to talk with enough people to effectively market everything. They must rely heavily on paid advertising. The bulk of American Angus Association members fall somewhere between these two extremes.

Just remember, buyers don't know what influences them to buy. They receive information from many sources over a considerable period of time. The key is to invest in media that can deliver

your message effectively, efficiently and frequently to the designated audience. But if you do a good job of breeding and marketing, your business will grow. One day you will need to develop customers among other registered Angus breeders. This is when you will need to use the *Angus Journal*.

In the meantime be thankful for *Angus Journal* advertisers. They provide all of us with a wealth of information about Angus cattle, Angus pedigrees and Angus performance records. They also make it possible for members to receive the *Angus Journal* 11 times a year for only \$20. That \$20 pays most of the cost of postage and paper. Writing, editing, photography and printing are extra.

Without advertisers the *Angus Journal* subscription rate would be more like \$40 or \$50. That's true, by the way, for virtually every farm and livestock publication you receive. So read and enjoy all of them, including the ads. But when it comes to designing your own ad program, use only those that efficiently reach the potential customers you wish to influence.



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