

Merchandising

by Keith Evans
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Publicity, customer service sell cattle

A nice letter from a Kansas Angus breeder pays a compliment to the American Angus Association public relations program, and highlights how a little publicity and good will can help sell Angus cattle.

After apologizing for being a little late in writing, the breeder wrote:

In the spring of 1996, we had a cow that earned Pathfinder status, and shortly thereafter an article appeared in our local newspaper, recognizing her accomplishments. Soon after that, a local commercial cattle producer stopped by to look at the bulls we were offering for sale that spring. He mentioned to us that he was virtually unaware that we existed here until he had seen the article about our "special cow" in the paper. He went on to purchase five yearling bulls from us that year as a result of his initial visit to our ranch.

Later, sometime that summer, I received a notice that he happened to be a recipient of a Festival Sausage Certified Angus Beef™ gift pack, having been randomly selected from a group of producers who had (registered) Angus bulls transferred to them that spring.

This spring, he was one of the first customers to come to the ranch, and he selected five more yearling bulls from our 1997 offering. From the comments he made this spring, I expect him back next year.

Keith, I've always felt the Association's public relations efforts, including the press releases to local newspapers and the Certified Angus Beef sausage gift program, are examples of our Association's excellent member support, but I probably didn't realize how impacting they can be on a small breeder's business until now!

This kind of feedback from members is always appreciated, and flattering. But I don't reprint the letter to blow the Association's horn, but rather to show how simple publicity and customer service can sell cattle. It happens all the time.

It's a fact that many small breeders of registered Angus cattle run secret operations. Few people in the community know that they are

in the business, and as a result, few people stop by to purchase cattle. That's why it's important to keep performance records, breed quality cattle, be involved in local cattle organizations and get your name in the paper. When a breeder signs up for the Angus Herd Improvement Record (AHIR) program the Association sends a release to that person's hometown newspaper. Furthermore, news releases go out every year the breeder has a Pathfinder cow or bull listed in the Sire Evaluation Report.

If you are elected a delegate to the American Angus Association's Annual Meeting, a news release is sent. Same goes if you are elected to an office in a state or local Angus association and someone sends in a report to the Association. We also send out stories and photos about members, juniors and adults, who win in local, state and national Angus shows. That is one reason it pays to be active in Angus events and organizations. Some years ago a member of our Board of Directors told me that he sold five bulls every time a picture appeared in his hometown paper about his cattle winning at a show. He was exaggerating, but not much.

The office computer kicks out every thousandth non-member bull buyer who has an animal transferred to them. The buyer receives a letter from Dick Spader, executive vice president, and a package of Certified Angus Beef sausage as a thank you from the seller and the Association,

It stands to reason that you can't sell the first animal if no one knows that you have cattle for sale. Furthermore, the more people who know and appreciate your cattle, the more sales you are likely to make. Of course you must have the cattle genetics that commercial cattle producers want. Still, it has been my experience that most American Angus Association members have a far better breeding program than they do a marketing program.

You don't have to wait for the American Angus Association to send out publicity about you. You can let people in the community know about your Angus operation by being host for a field day, inviting the FFA chapter to come out and help you weigh cattle or by having an open house. Every time you take part in these events you must tell local media representatives. If they can't cover the event in person, most will at least take the information and write a news story.

Also, write letters, make telephone calls and talk to people one-on-one to spread the word that you are in the business of selling registered Angus cattle. And when you make a sale, let people know how pleased you are with them. On a purchase of several hundred dollars you can afford to at least write a thank you note. Better yet, give them a small gift of appreciation.

It's rewarding to breed registered Angus. But it doesn't start to pay off financially until people know you have Angus genetics that they can use. How do they learn about you? It's elementary, you have to tell them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Evans".