



Up Front

► by John Crouch, executive vice president

In the spirit of Thanksgiving

On the morning of Aug. 27, while going through the ever-increasing mound of mail that seems to gather on my desk while I'm away, I came to the Late Summer Newsletter 2002 from Yon Family Farms in Ridge Spring, S.C. Kevin and Lydia Yon are longtime friends from my days as a regional manager in the Southeast. And I might say, they were very young at that time.

As I read through the letter, I was reminded of a couple of things. One, it is a great honor to be an Angus breeder living in America, and, two, the worth of individuals should never be measured by material holdings, but rather by how they handle adversity.

With their permission, Kevin and Lydia are assisting me by contributing a portion of their newsletter to this column.

It begins,

Thanks, Kevin and Lydia, for putting things in perspective. When times get tough in agriculture, we tend to see the negatives that come our way more vividly than the positives that might be hidden in between. It's been a tough summer for cattle producers across the country, but we've seen tough times before and, there's no question, we'll see them again. I have faith that every single one of you that is challenged by a shortage of resources for your operation will find

innovative ways to overcome those obstacles.

Finding the good in what seems to be a negative situation is a constant challenge in agriculture. This rule holds true for the Angus business as well. When you're confronted with change, or with an idea that seems to be all wrong at first glance, I challenge you to dig deeper into that idea and look at it from all perspectives. Upon further review, it might start to become a little clearer that, long-term, it's what is best for your business.

I encourage all of you to attend our Annual Meeting in Louisville this month and to hear about the changes and challenges your Association has faced this past year. I'm looking forward to sharing them with you.

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The Drought Continues — Year 5

Chances are that you have had a dry, dusty summer like we have. Fortunately, we were able to get one decent cutting of hay before we dried up again. This extended drought that has gripped [South Carolina] for the past five years continues to be the main topic among the farming community. The main question is who has had less rain than who! We can't help but think how easy raising grass and cattle will seem when we get back to a year with normal rainfall. Undoubtedly, the weather patterns have forced us to become better managers and we have learned to make do with less. We don't dare minimize the severity of the situation, but we can look at this as a time of both challenges and opportunities.

Challenges ...

- Providing water in areas where creeks and ponds have gone dry
- Dealing with lower cattle prices
- Feeding cows during months when they are normally grazing

-Growing/finding sources of roughage

Opportunities ...

- Using value-based marketing avenues with opportunities to be paid for what you produce
- Learning to use alternative feedstuffs ... grazing crop residues ... grazing woodlands, using commodity by-products
- Opening the "genetic toolbox" and using the tools to get the job done — EPDs (expected progeny differences), ultrasound data and production records
- The new Farm Bill presents many opportunities for cost sharing for conservation practices including:
 - Installing water troughs and wells
 - Cross fencing and stream/pond borders
 - No-till planting
 - Nutrient management (soil testing and keeping up with what we apply)
 - Prescribed grazing (systems to best utilize forages)
 - Waste storage facility development

-Converting marginal crop land to grassland
Many of these practices we might do anyway, but with the cost share incentives we might just do them sooner!
While the best solution is obviously a break in the weather, until that happens we will learn to make do with what we have and become better conservationists. Some of the greatest Americans that ever lived were those who lived during the Great Depression and World War II. They emerged with their values intact, stronger, more thankful for what they had, and thrifty — traits that can be applied to most any business for the benefit of all. The drought, a tough market, and the lingering threat of terrorism/bioterrorism are adversities that stare us in the face today. We have faith that we can persevere and prosper, despite challenging times, and be better for it.