



## Don't fight trends, Take advantage of them

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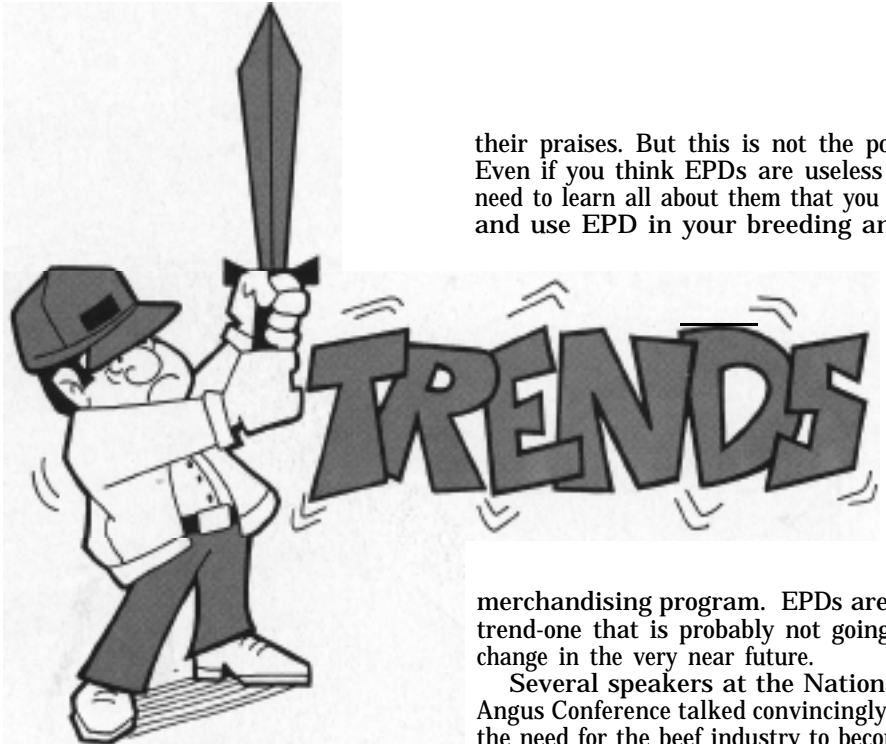
Try as you might, if you are in the business to produce and sell a product, you can seldom fight a trend, at least not profitably. Advertising experts advise us to identify trends as early as possible and take full advantage of them.

A good example is the Avon company. The organization failed early to identify the shift of women into the marketplace. While this trend gathered steam the Avon Ladies continued to ring doorbells only to find fewer and fewer customers at home. Business sagged until new sales methods were developed, among them stepped-up catalog marketing.

We have a somewhat similar situation in the cattle business. Many have not yet discovered the fact that more farmers than ever have off-farm jobs. Because these part timers do much of their farm work evenings and on weekends they don't fall into the pattern of more traditional farmers and livestock producers. Registered Angus breeders who want to sell to these potential customers must develop new merchandising approaches.

Many in the registered beef cattle business didn't recognize or accept the trend to larger, growthier cattle in the late 1960s. When their sales slumped they blamed show judges, misinformed extension people, or their respective breed association. They found it hard to accept that the commercial cattle industry trend was toward the "new" type of cattle. Fact was nothing could be done to reverse the long term trend. There was no way to rebuild demand for the traditional late 1950s early 1960s cattle. Some people resisted so long, they were forced out of the registered cattle business.

If you believe what was said at the recent National Angus Conference in Billings, Mont., the trend in cattle size



their praises. But this is not the point. Even if you think EPDs are useless you need to learn all about them that you can and use EPD in your breeding and

today may be to "moderate" or "optimum." At least two commercial cow-calf producers on the program said as much. In a description of his registered Angus bull supplier, one rancher used these words: "He treats commercial cowmen right, he doesn't go for the great big bulls, he puts genetics in there."

That happens to be in the West. It may not be the same in your part of the country or with your particular customers. But if your customers included these two commercial cow-calf producers or if you wanted them as customers, then your program would have to be geared to fill their needs:

Another trend, if one believes what is printed in nearly every issue of nearly every livestock publication in this country, is Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs). Few people today doubt the value of EPDs and many scientists sing

merchandising program. EPDs are a trend-one that is probably not going to change in the very near future.

Several speakers at the National Angus Conference talked convincingly of the need for the beef industry to become a consumer-driven business. What they were referring to, for the most part, was the current consumer trend of wanting little if any fat trim on retail beef. It makes no difference that the consumer doesn't eat the fat whether he or she cuts it off or the butcher does. It makes no difference that the price is higher per pound for closely trimmed beef. The fact is that consumers don't want it on there, and the retailer who fails to recognize this trend and act upon it sells fewer dollars worth of beef.

The successful business person, as keynote speaker Dr. Del Allen told the National Angus Conference audience, must identify what he or she can sell and then produce it. And very often what can be sold reflects today's popular trend-yes, even in the cattle business.

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