



For the third consecutive year, I have good fiscal news to report to you in this November column. Registrations are up again this fiscal year by 9.18 percent over a year ago, and the highest since 1984, at 156,697. Transfers are up 9.58 percent; new members 7.32 percent and junior membership 4.97 percent.

It is difficult to predict what will happen in this business, even a few months from now, let alone a few years. But it does appear that the Angus breed should experience some sustained growth in the foreseeable future, growth that is above any growth we might experience in U.S. cow numbers.

Based upon beef cow numbers in this country, we shouldn't have experienced any growth the past three years. During this period, numbers have declined, or possibly held steady for 1989. Yet during this period, registrations of Angus cattle have increased. We have been able to increase the Angus market share of the beef business.

Some of you who are new to Angus business may not appreciate the significance of this growth. But from 1968 to 1986, annual registrations of Angus cattle fell from an all-time high of 406,310 to 133,487. There were some very knowledgeable members of the American Angus Association who thought at the time that registrations would continue to decline to 100,000 or so and hold there for a number of years. Had that happened, your Association would be very different than it is today — services would be fewer and costs would be much higher.

As a result, what has happened the past three years, and particularly what happened in 1989, is very sweet indeed.

Many members of the American Angus Association, when they saw in the 1960's that the type of cattle most in demand was changing, accepted the challenge to change their Angus. Those who survived the period threw out old ideas and dramatically revised their breeding programs. They put their herds on the AHIR program so that they could better evaluate their breeding programs and then improve them.

In the early 1970's a group of interested and foresighted Association members got together. They said we need to develop a program to take better advantage of the Angus breed's ability to produce high quality, well marbled beef. Out of this eventually came the Certified Angus Beef program, a program that in 1989 marketed 71 million pounds of Certified Angus Beef.

It was during this period that you Association leaders plunged ahead with National Sire Evaluation and issued the first Sire Evaluation Report. It was expensive, not a lot of people understood it, and it didn't have lot of impact on our business the first few years. Naturally it and Expected Progeny Differences, which were also new, came in for a good deal of criticism. But the Board held firm and today there is little doubt that National Cattle Evaluation, which was the result of all this pioneering work, is contributing greatly to our growth.

One more thing, throughout this uncertain time in the cattle business and the Angus business, the members continued to support a strong national advertising and public relations program. It is a fact that advertising pays bigger eventual dividends when done during a downturn in business. But when funds are short, the temptation is strong to dramatically reduce promotion. For the most part, the Association was able to resist this temptation during the 20-year period.

So with this background, you can see why it is with a great deal of pleasure that I report the third consecutive growth year for your American Angus Association. This growth is no accident or fluke of nature.

Furthermore, I think that if we continue to be open to change, willing to accept challenges, continue to elect strong, farsighted Association leaders, and as individual members, continue to remain interested in the Association and willing to express our concerns, that we will not see the end of this Angus growth for some time to come.

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