

## Your Cows Aren't Too Good to Sell

We are in the business to sell registered Angus cattle. As a result of our efforts customers now and then come by who need problems solved or who even want to get in the registered Angus business themselves. More often than you might expect, these potential buyers fail to get the seller to understand their problems or they have difficulty getting a breeder to part with really good females.

Obviously a breeder's very best females must be retained as replacements in order to continue herd improvement. Still, to establish a market for Angus females, and enhance a reputation as a breeder, it is essential to market quality females at competitive prices. But some producers don't have a firm policy on marketing registered females. They just know their culls are better than a lot of other people's best females.

Just because someone is willing to pay a darn good price for a quality set of females doesn't mean the cattle are underpriced. But some people think so, and it worries them. It reminds me of a story that John Crouch tells.

Back a few years ago his late father, Wayland, was managing an association consignment sale in Tennessee. Wayland was having a difficult time getting one breeder to send in information on his consignments. At the last minute he telephoned and told the man that he had only one more day to get the entries in.

"I'm writing the footnotes on those two cows right now, and I'll get the information to you tomorrow," the breeder promised.

The next morning the man called back. "Wayland," he said, "I got up and re-read those footnotes I wrote last night. Those two cows are just too good to sell. I'm going to keep 'em."

Maybe he was just so good at writing advertising copy, that he sold himself. More than likely the man just didn't want to part with these females good enough to be of use to someone else.

In business one thing never changes. The seller always thinks his cattle are worth more than does the buyer. The key to being a good marketer, however, is to know the value of cattle, how they can be



expected to perform under certain conditions, and then to promote and price them accordingly.

Another thing we marketers need to keep in mind is to never assume too much about potential buyers. I have heard sellers comment that they didn't want to sell cows to "so and so" because he didn't look like the kind of producer who would take proper care of them.

Fact is, you don't know what a potential customer needs and wants, or what kind of operation he or she has, unless you have spent a lot of time asking questions and really listening to what the person has to say. Only after you have a good understanding of your potential customers can you do a good job of providing them with the kind of cattle they need, and that will turn them into repeat buyers.

Things aren't always what they appear to be. That's why making unfounded assumptions, and then acting upon them can be costly. It is a bit like the old story of the drug store owner. One day a car pulled up in front and a man got out and rushed into the store. "Do you have anything for hiccups?" the obviously distressed man asked.

The druggist, quickly sizing up the situation, sharply slapped the man on the back and shouted in his ear, nearly sending him into shock. "What did you do that for?" the customer asked. "Well you don't have hiccups do you?" the druggist asked with a smug smile on his face. "No," the customer said, "but I suspect that my wife out in the car still does!"

*Keith Evans*