

Newsletters Can Have Marketing Punch

Many Angus marketing challenges demand to be solved with a newsletter.

Newsletters have the flexibility to expand on a subject, and cover several ideas or news items. An advertisement, on the other hand, must be brief and stick to one subject, even one idea. Newsletters are timely since they can be written, printed and mailed in a matter of days. They allow the marketer to put detailed information in the hands of interested, potential customers and past customers. Easily targeted, there is virtually no waste circulation. And if done properly they can be very cost effective, even inexpensive.

A prime example of this kind of newsletter arrived on my desk the other day from William Switzer. Switzer is a member of Production Angus Associates (PAA), a group of Iowa Angus breeders who cooperatively market registered Angus, primarily to commercial cattle producers. (See the article, "All For One & One For All" in 1995 Herd Reference Edition.)

The newsletter featured feedlot information on groups of steers sired by PAA bulls. It included results on 49 head of steers raised by PAA members in which 37 (75 percent) qualified for the Certified Angus Beef Program with no Selects and 12 percent USDA Prime.

The lead story featured a quote from one satisfied customer. This customer's PAA sired steers did so well on the rail that the packer who purchased them contacted the producer to say he wanted the opportunity to bid on the next group of steers.

In addition the newsletter announced PAA's new evaluation program for customers' cattle. A commercial feedlot feeds out customers' cattle at regular feedlot rates. PAA collects performance and carcass data, and provides it to customers. Also included was an announcement of an upcoming PAA private treaty cow sale, and an update on the calves that will be in next year's bull sale.

One PAA member writes the newsletter on his personal computer. He uses a standard PC publishing program. It is printed on colored paper by a local "instant" printer, and mailed by the members. The mailing list is maintained on a computer which prints out adhesive address labels which are affixed by hand to the self-mailing, single sheet newsletter. Between 500 and 600 copies are mailed, usually first class. Postage is the biggest out-of-pocket expense. This amounts to \$192 for 600 pieces. The only other costs are for a ream or two of paper, printing, and the address labels.

The mailing list includes past customers, as well as cattle producers whom PAA views as potential customers – known cattle producers within their defined market area who are not yet customers. (Contact me for a copy-machine reproduction of the newsletter.)

What kind of information should you include in your newsletter?

Whatever you are doing that will interest customers. You can discuss the artificial insemination (AI) bulls you are using, and why.

Outline bull test results, and potential benefits to customers. Report on weaning weights, cow expected progeny

differences (EPDs), calf crop percentage, etc. If you have cows in the Pathfinder

Report, then elaborate on them and what it all means.

Always keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to sell cattle. Use testimonials if you can get them.

Your most satisfied customers will often be glad to tell their success stories. Promote upcoming auction sales or consignment sales you will participate in. Let all your customers know when you have cattle for sale.

You are not a writer, you say. You might find that you, or a member of your family, can do better than you think. Sign up for a one-day business short course on the basics of newsletter writing and production. Or collect the information and get a high school journalism instructor, newspaper reporter or other trained writer to help you. Where there is a will, there is a way.

How often should you print and mail a newsletter? That's up to you. Some people publish quarterly or semi-annually. Others mail when they have something to say. That's how the PAA group does it. Bill Switzer says they print, only when they have solid news to share with customers.

The only argument against irregular publication is that it's easy to put off when you think you are too busy. That's unfortunate, because good newsletters are one of the most effective marketing tools available to registered Angus breeders.



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