



Make a Difference

BY RON BOLZE

This past summer at a meeting of the American Angus Association regional managers and support staff in Manhattan, Kan., Sam Hands, Triangle H Grain & Cattle Co., Garden City, Kan. (the first feedlot licensed by the Certified Angus Beef [CAB] Program), presented the following:

The Paradox

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.

We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we have higher incomes, but lower morals; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when

you can choose either to make a difference or just hit delete.

— Author unknown

Now you might wonder what this has to do with the production of commercial or seedstock Angus cattle. Isn't it time to make a difference and contribute to the turnaround in the erosion of beef demand relative to other competing sources of protein? Yes, individually, small changes in an attempt to make a difference will have a minimal effect. However, don't overlook "strength in numbers." Collectively, small changes made by many will make a difference. Consider the following opportunities:

1. Use Angus sires that have the potential to make genetic progress in multiple production traits, plus carcass merit, simultaneously. The Fall 1999 Angus *Sire Evaluation Report* includes 2,378 bulls evaluated for carcass merit. Of all bulls in the many listings, 71% have actual or interim carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs); 638 are positive for the genetically antagonistic traits of marbling and percent retail product; and 49 of the top 50 sires based on registered progeny numbers have carcass EPDs.



The Fall 1999 Angus *Sire Evaluation Report* is available through the Internet at www.angus.org and has sire sort capability to find the bulls that meet your specifications. All this is due to the efforts of Angus seedstock producers who submit information to the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR) program, which is under the direction of John Crouch.

2. Seedstock producers can use Angus Information Management Software

(AIMS) to simplify Angus herd recordkeeping and provide a greater service to commercial clientele. AIMS is the upgrade to the Angus Herd Management System (AHMS), which has been in use since 1994. Scott Johnson and support staff at the Association office provide timely assistance.



3. Use the American Angus Association's regional managers (see page 282) as a well-informed field force to create greater demand for your cattle. These men see a lot of cattle and have an excellent hand on what works and what does not.

4. Use the Angus Resource Clearinghouse Network (ARCNet) directed by Bill Bowman, the Association's director of commercial relations. ARCNet is a 24-hour online listing service wherein Angus-sired calves, yearlings and replacement females can be described according to gender, weight, vaccinations, genetic input, availability dates, etc. Forms are available through the Commercial Relations Department (call [816] 383-5109). You can also input the information electronically.



5. Create greater predictability, consistency and uniformity in the calf crop. The U.S. beef cow industry has responded to market signals and has "Angus-ized" the commercial cow herd, or at least has made it black-hided. However, gone are the days when merely being black-hided will command premiums. In fact, in the not-too-distant future, just being Angus-sired will be insufficient.

As an example, the *Certified Angus Beef*TM acceptance rate of black-hided cattle is 18%-20%. The *Certified Angus Beef* acceptance rate of Angus-sired cattle is

27%-29%. And the *Certified Angus Beef* acceptance rate of Angus sire-identified cattle is 34%, with isolated examples of 60%-70% acceptance rates from the same herd year after year. The true premiums will be commanded by those cattle from herds with a proven track record for both feedlot performance (average daily gain, feed efficiency, cost per pound of gain, closeouts, etc.) and carcass characteristics (dressing percent, quality and yield grade distribution).

Genetic change takes time. In the short term, greater calf-crop uniformity can be achieved by shortening the breeding season (45 days for yearling heifers; 60 for cows), resulting in less range in calving dates and weaning age and weight. This, coupled with the continued use of bulls with similar EPDs and phenotypic characteristics on the current cow herd with continual culling of nonproductive and outlier females over time, will make the difference in calf-crop uniformity.

6. Precondition your calf crop and make the difference in reduced calf morbidity and mortality for yourself if you retain ownership or for the next owner if calves are sold. Well-planned and implemented vaccination programs, as designed by your veterinarian, also have the potential to enhance carcass quality grade, again as the result of enhanced feedyard performance and reduced sickness. Adherence to strict quality assurance principles makes a huge difference in vaccine efficacy and in reducing injection-site blemishes and lesions. Beef demand is at stake.

7. If you retain ownership through a commercial feedyard, consider a CAB Program-licensed feedyard. These folks represent some of the true professionals in the game and are in a position to market high-quality cattle to their best advantage through pricing grids driven by a quality emphasis. Contact Bryce Schumann or John Stika at the Supply Development office in Manhattan, Kan., for a current list of feedyards enrolled in the CAB Program's Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP).

8. Focus on convenient, value-added



beef products. Recognize that today's dual-income, on-the-run family structure does not allow time for roast beef like Grandma used to make. The CAB Program, through its relationships with licensed distributors, now has access to precooked, microwave-ready, heat-and-serve beef entrées that taste like Grandma used to make but are conducive to fast-paced lifestyles with a fraction of the preparation or cleanup time.

Call the toll-free CAB Program hotline to find out where these products are available (1-877-2-EAT-CAB).

The list could go on and on. The point is, the little things we collectively do to "make the difference" can have an avalanche effect on enhancing the demand for high-quality beef.

Or we can just turn the page and forget about it.

