



# Merchandising

► by Keith Evans

## Avoid common ad mistakes

*Poor advertising is an expensive investment that no marketer can really afford.*

*Few registered cattle marketers realize just how costly poor advertising can really be.*

*They have never computed the huge return they can receive from hiring a professional to design advertisements and advertising programs that attract attention and deliver a powerful sales message. But the facts are simple.*

### Look at it this way

In most advertising readership studies I have seen, the worst ads are noticed by 5% or less of the readers, and only a fraction of this 5% read most of the ad. On the other end, the best ads are noticed by 40% or more readers and have high readership. This means that out of every 1,000 people who go through a cattle magazine, the poor ad is noticed by maybe 50 people, while 300 to 400 people notice the best ad.

For easy computing, let's assume that a one-page ad costs \$1,000 per insertion and that the total magazine circulation is 5,000. This means that the poor advertisement that attracts only 5% of readers costs \$4 per reader. On the other hand, the ad that attracts 30% of the readers costs only 66¢ per reader.

The cost benefits may be easier to understand if you look at it this way. In order to attract 1,500 readers with the poor ad, that advertiser would need to run it six times at a total cost of \$6,000. The high-quality advertisement will attract 1,500 readers for only \$1,000.

### Do the math

I know successful, large breeders who spend tremendous amounts of money on poor advertising to promote their annual consignment sales. With good ad planning, they could save thousands of dollars each year. By the same token, breeders with fewer cattle to sell could deliver their sales messages to thousands more potential

customers by investing a little more money to get high-quality ads.

Even knowing these facts, many seedstock marketers will be reluctant to part with the cash to hire an advertising professional or an ad agency. Yet the math is fairly simple. Let's say a professional will charge \$600 to design one ad that will run three times in a magazine with a circulation of 5,000. Should the new ad improve

readership from 250 readers to 1,500 readers, the advertiser will deliver his or her sales message to 1,250 additional readers each time the ad is published. Over the course of three insertions the cost will be only \$200 to gain 1,250 readers per ad. If the advertiser were to publish the improved ad more than three times, the professional investment per ad

would shrink to virtually nothing. It becomes even less significant if one or more of these ads is placed in a magazine with higher circulation.

Most breeders don't have ads that rank at the bottom. Your ads might be somewhere in the middle — neither poor nor outstanding. But if you can simply double your readership or increase it by only one-third, the investment in better ads remains highly economical.

### Makings of a good ad

I reread the other day a professional critique of advertisements entered some time ago in the Livestock Publications Council (LPC) critique contest. The

observations, however, are just as valid today:

- ▶ "There is too much going on in these ads." Ads should be clean and simple and deliver one strong message instead of trying to cover everything.
- ▶ "Headlines are just labels." Writing good headlines is an art. They must attract attention and promise a benefit that will be expanded upon in the illustration and the copy.
- ▶ "Too many ads have little copy blocks all over the page." Ads with information scattered all over the page are confusing. Everyone is busy, and none of us take the time to read advertising that is irritating and hard to understand.
- ▶ "There are animals looking off the page all over the place." It is so simple. An animal or a person should always face into the ad to lead the reader to the message. But amateurs violate this rule every day.
- ▶ "A single advertiser's ads aren't consistent from one month to the next." The appearance of your ads should be the same month after month. The design of an ad should identify the advertiser at a glance. Consistency in design and message packs power into an advertising program.
- ▶ "Illustrations too often feature poor photography and don't stop the reader." The illustration should be the strongest element in a print advertisement. The extra time and money spent to obtain high-quality illustrations pays dividends.

Somehow or other, advertisers need to avoid these and other simple mistakes that rob an advertisement of its power and effectiveness. You can learn the basics of good advertising and apply them to your program, or hire an expert to help.

However you do it, investing in top-quality advertising is the least expensive way to improve your marketing program.

*Keith Evans*  
E-MAIL: evans34@ccp.com

