



Up Front

► by **John Crouch**, executive vice president

Grow the program with customer service

Once a year for 123 years we have observed a new beginning, a new birth. We put away the old year and bring in the new one. Jan. 1 is an exciting time for those who acted sensibly and in a mature fashion on New Year's Eve. The prospect of black-eyed peas, sauerkraut and other traditional dishes, plus the anticipation of parades and football games before a roaring fireplace makes one even more anxious for the arrival of the New Year.

Consumers put Angus on top

For many cattle producers, January is also a time when the arrival of the new calf crop is anticipated. It is also the middle of the bull-selling season, especially for those who live in the northern tier of states.

The demand for Angus bulls by the commercial sector is, without question, the strongest in history. This demand is the result of many factors, but it is ultimately fueled by preferences for high-quality, nutritious, delicious beef at the consumer level.

There is no doubt in the mind of this scribe that the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) program has been responsible for this trend in consumer preference and, as a result, the name Angus is associated with the ultimate in beef products. As former Association

Executive Secretary Lloyd Miller once remarked, "The success of the Angus business hinges on consumer desires for high-quality steaks and roasts." Nothing could be more true.

Even so, CAB products only occupy about 8% of the total fed-beef market. The expansion of the program is limited by supply, so the challenge becomes "How do we increase supply?"

Means to an end

This was one of the challenges that gave birth to the idea of AngusSource®, given U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Process Verified Program (PVP) status in October 2005. AngusSource is a commercial marketing program that verifies age, source

and genetics of calves sired by registered Angus bulls.

AngusSource is not a program for everyone. Only those commercial producers who purchase and use registered Angus bulls that have been transferred into their names, or who use registered Angus bulls via artificial insemination (AI), can qualify for the program. Therefore, you, as a member of the Association, have ultimate control of this program. The advantages of AngusSource cannot be utilized by your commercial bull customers unless your bulls are registered and properly transferred to them.

Through the years, the success of the purebred industry has been due to the power and strength of breeding programs, the reputation of individual breeders and the loyalty of repeat customers.

Consumers and brands

Another factor coming into play more and more is customer service. Growing up, I recall some of our neighbors would use nothing except red tractors and equipment. Others preferred green and were loyal to that brand.

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REGIONAL MANAGERS—Refer to page 131.

CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF LLC

President—John Stika, Wooster, Ohio. For a CAB staff listing, refer to page 67.

The mere mention that a Chevy might be better than a Ford pickup could provoke harsh words. Fisticuffs were started over less. Since most farmers repaired their own equipment, service did not seem to be much of a factor.

Times change. Consumers nowadays are loyal to a brand only if that brand provides superior service — the best experience. The cattle industry is no different. The food industry is no different. Commercial customers will be repeat buyers if:

- ▶ they are treated well;
- ▶ the products they buy perform as expected or better; and
- ▶ they are provided that wee bit of special service that they might not normally expect.

Loyalty then re-enters the picture.

Programs such as AngusSource provide much-needed marketing advantages to the commercial industry by documenting

superior Angus genetics to the buyers of commercial cattle, to the feedlot operators and to the packers. The process begins with the registration and transfer of the registered Angus bull you produce. Your commercial customer deserves this service.



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