



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Value in diversity

We talk a lot about the diversity of the Angus cow. She can fit almost anywhere — from the near tropical environment of Florida to the mountain ranges of the West; from shortgrass country to the fescue belt; from the Sandhills to the rocks and ridges to the sagebrush and mesquite.

Just as diverse

What struck me as I interviewed Bill and Jennifer Davis of Sidney, Mont., for the upcoming “President’s Perspective” article and again as I watched the change in terrain as I flew from Saint Joseph, Mo., to the 2010 National Angus Conference in Bozeman, Mont., was the difference in the people it takes to raise cows in the various environments.

Of course, it’s not the same cow that serves as the foundation of the Western herds as in Missouri. It’s the same with people. Some folks enjoy the densely populated eastern states, while others prefer the sparsely populated western states. In Ohio cows are raised on farms, in Oklahoma they’re raised on ranches, and in Missouri they may be raised on either farms or ranches.

Some of our cattlemen rely solely on the cattle for an income. Some don’t expect any profit from the cattle enterprise. Some people have been in the business for generations, and some have pioneered their own cattle business. Need for and accessibility to labor, supplies, equipment, genetics, markets and

services range from abundant to nearly nonexistent. And the rural-urban interface is as different as the flight zones of cows in Maryland vs. those in range country.

It’s little wonder we approach discussions from different viewpoints. Issues pose different payoffs and different complications to our ways of conducting business — not to mention that little issue called profitability. Consider all the factors that weigh in on the subject of permanent identification, which Troy Smith wrote about in his story on the damage hot-iron brands cause to hides and related permanent identification issues (see August *Angus Journal*, page 116).

Uniting ag’s voice

The problems arise when we bring our differences to town on issues that affect us. As Young Cattlemen’s Conference participant James Coffey (see page 74) presented highlights of his trip to the Board of Directors in September, one of the things he mentioned was that legislators in Washington, D.C., are frustrated with the conflicting viewpoints in the beef industry.

For the legislators, it creates a no-win situation — it’s hard to take a stand on agriculture without ticking off half the industry. So, why bother?

We need a way to build a united front. We need a way to bring everybody’s issues to the table and discuss them so that in our ignorance of another group’s circumstances we don’t foster an us vs. them mentality only to have the door shut to all of us in D.C. And the cussin’ and discussin’ should happen before it is a yes or no vote. Actually, let’s drop the cussin’ and keep the discussin’ to change the tone of the conversation.

I don’t have the answer ... except the far-fetched notion of would it be great if the organizations at odds with each other merged so that we could take a position as an entire industry rather than a faction. Wouldn’t that be something?

Issues are seldom black or white. We’ve got to learn to recognize the value in other people’s opinions and factor them into our actions. Remember, sometimes the fastest way to be heard is to listen long enough to establish a rapport with folks so they will want to hear your opinion.

National conference highlights

If you missed the National Angus Conference, visit the newsroom at www.nationalangusconference.com to read summaries of the sessions, look at presenters’ PowerPoints and listen to their presentations. Photo galleries from the tours are also posted. Video highlights and more are available at www.angus.org.

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