



Movin' Forward

► by **Bryce Schumann**, CEO, American Angus Association

Season of promise

During a time of promising opportunities in the cattle business, don't forget agriculture's many challenges. This spring, find your voice. Share your passion.

Opportunity knocks

Spring has arrived and, with it, a positive outlook for the Angus breed. Registrations and new memberships are rising, and the spring sale season is breaking new records in the Angus business.

These increases are spurred by many factors, such as an increasing demand for high-quality beef, a 60-year low in cattle inventories, increased interest in heifer retention and unprecedented international interest in Angus beef and Angus genetics.

Ag economists point to these trends and to rising global populations as indicators that cow-calf producers will be in the driver's seat for the next several years. Everything seems to be headed in the right direction.

However, there's one trend that's anything but positive.

Culture shift

There's a growing disconnect between consumers and those who produce their food and fiber. More and more people are migrating away from rural life and are,

therefore, losing touch with the realities of food production. It's a population shift that leaves consumers with a lot of questions and opens the door to misinformation from organizations that do not have agriculture's best interests at heart.

Agriculture advocacy is a prevalent topic at nearly every cattlemen's meeting, and if you pay attention to any ag media, the discussion often turns to one of becoming an agricultural advocate. It is an important message, and the movement seems to be gaining steam, but the phenomenon isn't entirely new. There are generations of cattlemen and women who have tirelessly served as "agriculture advocates" before the term was even coined.

Take my grandfather "Shorty" Schumann, for instance. He was a tough, hard-working German farmer and stockman who'd tell you what was on his mind. Like many of his generation, he believed in hard work, discipline and giving back to the industry that gave him so much. Back then, giving back meant volunteering as a 4-H leader or for the

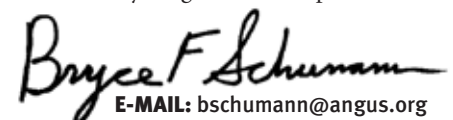
local cattlemen's organization. Today, we're still able to volunteer in local ag organizations, but our ability to give back has greatly expanded thanks to growing Internet capabilities.

Today's ag advocates can reach out to consumers through blogs that detail everyday activities on their ranches or videos that open the gates of the farm to anyone willing to watch. Advocates email links of positive messages to their friends. They discuss beef with the stranger next to them on a plane. They help educate their ultimate customer — consumers — at every step.

The most effective advocates always stay centered on the good of agriculture. They keep it positive without reacting to negative images or messages portrayed by ag's detractors. The best agriculture advocates act, not react. The American Angus Association's own television program, *I Am Angus*, is a good example of sharing positive agriculture messages with the general public. (Episodes are available at www.angus.org or via YouTube search.)

This spring, I encourage you to become an agriculture advocate. That doesn't mean you need to start writing your own daily blog. Being an ag advocate could be as simple as striking up a conversation with someone at church or the grocery store. It could be inviting the local school to participate in a farm tour, or taking five minutes to share a link to an *I Am Angus* segment.

Could anything be more simple?


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