



Movin' Forward

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

In your hands

Like just about everyone these days, cattlemen have little free time. They're busy managing their Angus herds and building their livelihoods. They don't have a lot of time on their hands. And although an active fall season will continue to offer scant opportunities for anything but ranchwork, there's one issue that deserves some undivided attention in an increasingly divided industry — an issue that can change the very things you're working toward, for better or worse.

What is GIPSA?

Since mid-June, cattle industry stakeholders have been abuzz with debate. That's when the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) GIPSA — the Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration — first announced a proposed rule on livestock marketing.

The rule would add several new regulations under the Packers & Stockyards Act that GIPSA says would describe and clarify conduct in violation of the act and allow for more effective and efficient enforcement by GIPSA.

USDA suggests the proposed regulations would clarify conditions for industry compliance and provide for a fairer

marketplace by preventing packer-to-packer sales and increasing market transparency, but not all ranchers agree.

Proponents say the rule could provide a fair playing field and preserve competition in a consolidating industry.

Opponents say it could lead to unintended consequences like a flurry of lawsuits, damage to contract pricing and value-based marketing, and the public release of confidential business information.

That's a lot on the line no matter where you stand on the issue.

Where you come in

Recognizing the magnitude of the issue, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and USDA

hosted a joint meeting in Fort Collins, Colo., Aug. 27 to explore the role of antitrust and regulatory enforcement in agriculture and to hear from the meatpackers, feeders and hundreds of ranchers from around the country who attended. Today, talk continues across the countryside.

Much of what is being discussed will have significant effects — intended or unintended — on our more than 30,000 members and their commercial customers.

Together we've built the largest, most successful cattle breed in the history of the United States. The Angus breed today makes up a vast majority of the nation's cow herd; therefore, we have the most at stake. We owe it to ourselves and the generations before us to understand this proposed rule and what it means.

USDA is currently accepting comments until Nov. 22.

I encourage you to read the rule (available at www.gipsa.usda.gov) and industry perspectives like the statement by Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) on page 143. Become educated on the matter, and establish a well-informed position. Then submit your comments (via e-mail to comments.gipsa@usda.gov) and become a part of the process.

It's probably one of the most important things you'll cross off your to-do list this fall.


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