



THE CONSUMER LINK

New program promotes awareness to the consuming public

I think most of us would agree that we take a lot of things for granted in this world. The conveniences and comforts of modern technology, our health, the ones we love and, maybe most importantly, the privilege of living in a free country. Being able to live and work on a farm or ranch, or just simply being a part of production agriculture, is something most of us take for granted every day. Most people never realize the joys of working on the land or the satisfaction of serving as caretakers of livestock. For these opportunities, we are truly blessed.

For years beef producers have taken the consuming public for granted. Yes, the truth hurts, and we're all guilty. Educating consumers about the safety, healthfulness and delicious taste of beef has been someone else's job. Years of flat to declining demand for beef products is the wake-up call this industry has been receiving for more than 10 years ... but has refused to answer.

Most consumers don't know that agriculture is the nation's largest employer, with more than

22 million people working in some phase of it, from growing food and fiber to selling products in the supermarket. Because beef is the protein of choice for a large percentage of Americans, the beef industry and its producers play a key leadership role in agriculture and all the entities involved from production to consumption.

The majority of U.S. consumers know little about the origin of their food or how it is produced. Frankly, many of them don't care. They feel it is the producer's job to provide a safe, wholesome beef product – no questions asked. They take for granted the safety and abundance of this nation's food supply.

As the percentage of people in the United States directly involved with production agriculture or involved in the processing and marketing of agricultural products continues to decrease, the producers of our nation's food supply bear a greater responsibility. That responsibility includes providing information about how food is produced, who the people are who do the production, and the importance of consumer understanding and support of those entities.

Board of Directors in 1997, shows the commitment Angus breeders have to improving their business, their marketplace and ultimately their industry.

More specifically, long-range goal No. 10 is to "keep the membership informed of outside influences that affect the well-being of the Angus industry." While there are many influences of which producers should be aware, one of the most critical is consumer awareness of, and ultimately consumer demand for, beef. If not addressed by more industry groups and individual producers, the lack of consumer understanding of the beef business and beef products will continue to have a negative effect on demand – now and in the future.

In order to fill the role of the mission statement and ultimately to reach these long-term goals, it is clear that a grassroots effort by producers to broaden the consumer's knowledge of beef production and beef products should be a priority for Angus breeders and the American Angus Association.

The time is now

The Association's Board of Directors approved a proposal presented by staff to launch the American Angus Association's PACE Program. The purpose of PACE, which stands for Public Awareness/Consumer Education, is to encourage Angus breeders to increase their awareness of consumer issues and to make an effort in their state and local area to educate consumers about the safety and wholesomeness of beef.

Because you are in the beef business, educating your customers – consumers – is your job. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) spend millions of dollars every year administering programs and developing materials to spread the good word about beef. However, those efforts can be multiplied if producers across the United States pitch in for the cause. In short, it's time we start building demand for our product.

The Angus youth movement already has a head start on this project. During the candidate/delegate dinner of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) in Tulsa, Okla., more than half of the nine candidates vying for a position on the junior Board stated public awareness of beef industry issues and

Your role

With more than 30,000 adult and junior members, the American Angus Association is the world's largest beef breed organization. The Association also communicates with more than 70,000 producers on its commercial mailing list. This position enables it to play a key leadership role in the beef industry and its related entities. This commitment to leadership is best

expressed in the Association's mission statement, which reads:

"To provide programs, services and leadership to enhance the genetics of the Angus breed, broaden its influence within the beef industry, and expand the market for high-quality beef worldwide."

This statement, along with the 10 long-range goals set forth by the Association's



consumer knowledge of beef products are the biggest issues facing today's beef industry.

Likewise, participants in the NJAA's Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) conference in Saint Joseph, Mo., participated in a workshop titled "What Would You Say?" that put participants in hands-on consumer-education opportunities.

The knowledge level of these young people and their ability to address these issues is amazing.

What's it all about?

The PACE program will include several projects:

- **Monthly column** in the Angus Journal.
- **Producer information kits.** The Association will have kits available for both members and nonmembers who want the facts on current beef and consumer issues.
- **Angus Journal and Angus Beef Bulletin editorial.** You'll start seeing more editorial in upcoming issues about Angus breeders who are committed to increasing public awareness of beef and the effect that commitment has had on their operations. Other features will keep

you current on industry trends and issues that contribute to PACE efforts.

• **Angus Journal Land Stewardship Award.** The goal of the Angus Journal's Land Stewardship Award is to recognize conservation-minded Angus producers and to communicate to others that this industry does care about the land, water, natural resources and wildlife. Efforts will be made to publicize this program and its annual winners to all U.S. farm media, as well as to editors of nontraditional farm publications, increasing not only awareness of beef producers' efforts to preserve the land, but also awareness of the Angus breed.

• **NJAA and the Directions newsletter.** Educating our young people about the importance of communicating with consumers and raising public awareness of the positive things in our industry is a critical step toward developing spokespeople for beef. PACE programs will include junior activities and events, plus articles about juniors making a difference with PACE will appear in the Directions newsletter.

- **PACE on the Internet.** Information of interest

to consumers will be available on the American Angus Association's Internet home page at www.angus.org. Links will also be established to other Web sites that provide useful information for PACE activities.

Only the beginning

This is only the beginning. We're excited about the opportunities the PACE program offers to Angus breeders and the possibilities it provides for increasing demand for beef. The American Angus Association is committed to these efforts and encourages all members, no matter your age, years of experience or location, to get involved with PACE in some way.

More than anything, the success of this program will be determined by how we as an industry work together as a team. To truly make a difference, the beef business needs everyone's help. We need you to help set the PACE ... today!

