



Up Front

by **JOHN CROUCH**, executive vice president, American Angus Association

Partnering for success

We are all partners in a great adventure called beef cattle production. To some, this adventure provides a livelihood. To others it is purely a social endeavor. It fills yet a dual role for many.

Regardless of one's motivation, producing beef cattle requires a reliance on others to succeed. And our partners rely on us for their successes. Maximizing the value of industry partnerships is a role the American Angus Association takes to heart.

The adventure begins

This adventurous partnership begins, in its basic form, with a synergetic relationship between people, animals and the land. Noted scholar and author Alvin Sanders wrote in 1915, "There is

no higher form of art than that which deals with the intelligent manipulation of animal life; the modeling of living, breathing creatures in accordance with the will and purpose of a guiding mind. It rises in its boundless possibilities to heights that are fairly God-like ... The world of human endeavor presents no nobler field of action, no realm of thought demanding a higher order or ability."

No one ever said it better.

Partners for genetic improvement

Partnerships with our most valued customers, the commercial cattlemen of the country, begin with supplying seedstock that will not only improve their lives but also provide an economic

incentive for them to stay in business. This seedstock must be accompanied with information that enables the commercial producer to make sound, accurate decisions on seedstock selection.

To that end, the Association partners with seedstock and commercial producers to maintain the most extensive and reliable database of expected progeny differences (EPDs) in the industry. New programs constantly are being developed and evaluated to meet industry needs. As an example, in response to requests by commercial cattlemen, the first three \$Value Indexes (\$F, \$G and \$B) were released last fall to provide a simplified way for commercial producers to make directional change in multiple traits.

Marketing partners

The partnership does not stop at supplying genetic information. Seedstock must also be accompanied by service. By service, I refer to assistance in establishing management programs that dovetail into marketing plans. The Association partners with seedstock producers to promote the Angus breed and members through its national advertising campaign and public relations activities, as well as through the efforts of the regional managers out in the field.

Providing marketing opportunities has been a central focus of the Commercial Programs Department. Programs such as the Beef Record Service (BRS) and AngusSource provide opportunities for seedstock producers to help commercial customers realize the full value of their Angus genetics.

Beyond the farm

Cattlemen must partner with the feeding and packing industries. This partnership must begin with the provision of educational materials that enable the feeder to manage and market cattle wherein a desirable combination of quality grade, yield grade and dressing percentage occurs.

The partnerships Angus producers have forged with feedyards involved in the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Feedlot-Licensing Program (FLP) have reinforced the value of good genetics and have revealed better ways to manage cattle to meet the specifications of the brand. Those mutually beneficial partnerships have set the bar as to what is achievable in our industry today.

Likewise, partnerships extend to the packer. In many instances it is popular

to bash the packing industry; however, we would be hard-pressed if our large packers ceased to exist. Without their assistance, we would not have been able to set up a branded beef program that would be available to such a broad spectrum of producers.

Like all other facets of animal agriculture, packers are searching for answers and a road map for achieving maximum quality and lean yield. The key to success in the packing arena is information that can only come from a partnership between seedstock producers, commercial producers and feeders on what is commonly called the information highway.

The partner who administers the final test of our success is the consumer. In order to successfully partner with the consumer, we must determine exactly what he or she wants. A review of history reveals that during the past decade, when the per capita consumption of beef was declining, sales of *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) posted remarkable increases. Why? The answer is simple. Consumers were delighted with the quality and consistency of CAB products; hence, our partnership with consumers has been successful.

Sending the message

And, finally, the American Angus Association has a mutually beneficial partnership with its members, manifested in the information it provides. The Association offers a range of educational resources, including brochures and pamphlets, Angus Information Management Software (AIMS), instructive videos, and educational modules offered via the Internet.

Information is delivered through an unequalled communication avenue to the membership via the *Angus Journal* and to the commercial industry through the *Angus Beef Bulletin*. These publications are utilized as forums for editorial and educational information, as well as mediums for advertising and marketing registered Angus seedstock.

The American Angus Association is all about partnerships. It's a way of life.

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