



Movin' Forward

by **BRYCE SCHUMANN**, chief executive officer, American Angus Association

The storm ahead

Late December gave us one of the more memorable blizzards we've had in a long time. A massive storm pushed its way across the Midwest and into the Northeast. Caught in the storm's wake were cattle producers from western Kansas to Maine who fought snowdrifts, ice and plunging temperatures to get feed and water to their cow herds, while the rest of the nation celebrated the holidays.

It's ironic that many of our industry's critics have never actually cared for livestock, especially during a storm like this one, and even fewer people outside of agriculture understand what it really means to be a steward of cattle.

As committed Angus producers, we don't get a lot of credit these days for the work we do to take care of our animals.

Animal-rights activists are all too eager to point out the bad actions of a handful of bad people, but rarely — if ever — do they recognize the deep commitment farmers and ranchers have for their livestock.

Telling our story

In the future, there's little doubt our industry will come under even

greater scrutiny from activist groups, so it's imperative that we become more aggressive in telling our side of the story.

All of us do good things every day — but few of us actually tell anyone about the work we do.

During the last 12 months, our organization has stepped up our efforts to tell our story to the world, and to show consumers the good work you're doing to ensure cattle are raised humanely and under the best conditions possible.

Last fall, for instance, Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) launched a new element on its web site, called "Meet Local Angus Ranchers," which tells the stories of nearly 40 Angus producers across the country. The content, through its vivid photos, words and sometimes videos, enables consumers to make a direct link with the people who produce *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®), and to see firsthand the commitment we share not only to animal husbandry but also to producing a quality and safe product.

In addition, the Association's YouTube channel, a social networking web site that allows us to post videos about Angus

cattle and Angus breeders, has received more than 100,000 views from around the world. At press time, the American Angus Association has posted more than 100 videos, many of which tell the story of hard-working ranchers and farmers who are committed to their way of life, their communities, their livestock and their environments. You can now view — and share these videos with others — by visiting www.angus.org.

In early January, we also broadcast our first-ever *I Am Angus* program on RFD-TV. The hour-long documentary allowed us to reach an audience of approximately 30,000 to 60,000 households, consumers and producers alike, and to put our best foot forward on the public relations front.

Tell your story

However, much of the responsibility for advancing animal agriculture's message falls on individual producers like you.

One way to learn how to promote agriculture is through the checkoff-funded Masters in Beef Advocacy program, now



being offered by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA).

The free program, which is fast becoming one of the best ways for individual producers to counter misinformation about our industry, consists of six online training modules and a hands-on spokesperson training that features online advocacy, public speaking and techniques for working with the media.

Perhaps most importantly, all of us need to recognize that the storm we faced in December pales in comparison to the coming storms we'll face from activist groups in the future.

It is imperative that we recognize these threats to our industry, and that each of us acts now to tell our side of the story.

Give us a call or drop us an e-mail with suggestions or comments. Let's work together to advance our message to an even wider audience in the coming year.



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