

Why Should I Care About

Believe it or not, social media can be used for beef business.

by **KASEY BROWN**, *associate editor*

They say social affairs and business generally don't mix. Social media gets a bad rap as a newfangled addiction of millennials. Granted, Facebook did start in 2005 geared for college students only, but the behemoth social media platform has grown to inclusive accounts. There are many ways commercial cattlemen can benefit their operation by using social media.

Benefits of using social media

The average person spends three hours on social media a day, says Ashley Grant, director of digital marketing for Ranch House Designs, and traditional advertising is shifting. Print advertising is still a mainstay, but the trend is to boost marketing efforts through social media outlets.

Angus Media Digital Editor Jena McRell says many seedstock breeders use social media as an extension of their websites and sale books to provide timely updates on their sale offerings.

With more seedstock operations having social media accounts, it is another

way to see new genetics. They can provide instant updates on new sale pictures and ranch updates. Social media can help commercial cattlemen learn more about the seedstock operations from which they buy bulls, or from whom they could potentially buy bulls. Additionally, McRell adds, this widens your cattle network across the country, or even internationally.

American Angus Association Regional Manager Radale Tiner says he has noticed the trend that many cattlemen prefer to buy bulls from people they know. Social media can help cattlemen learn more about the personality and management practices of ranches that have interesting genetics, but are not located just down the road.

Social media is another way to stay up to date on agricultural news and policy. Many publications have Facebook and Twitter accounts to share the most up-to-date news, often as soon as it is available. This publication even has a Twitter account, @ABBeditor. "Live tweets" often come from educational conferences from attendees, and they include immediate nuggets of information from speakers during the conference.

Additionally, these publications can post the most timely management, herd health, genetic technology, or ways to improve the quality of your herd through their social media. This useful information that can be put to use on your operation is more easily highlighted individually through social media posts, says McRell.

Social media 101

If you've decided you may be interested in trying social media, you need to know how to use it. There are several different types of social media, so here is a crash course.

Facebook: This platform, available at www.facebook.com, is the most jack-of-all-trades platform of the social media options. Each profile — there can be personal "profiles" and business "pages" — has a wall. This wall can include posts from the profile administrator, or other people can write messages on the wall. Facebook allows posts without a character limit, so these posts can include more details. Photos and videos can be posted on the wall, too.

Friends on Facebook are mutual. To see everything a person posts, you must



be friends to do so. Friendship means they can see your full profile, too.

The Newsfeed is Facebook's home page. This Newsfeed compiles the top recent posts from your friends or business pages that you follow. You can "like" these posts or comment on them. "Liking" them merely shows that you enjoyed the post. Commenting lets you respond and say whatever you would like about that post. The public sees comments.

Social Media?



Twitter: Twitter (www.twitter.com) has a similar concept as Facebook in that each user has a profile and a newsfeed. However, Twitter posts, called tweets, are restricted to 140 characters.

Hashtags are common in Twitter posts. Hashtags consist of a pound symbol (#) in front of a word or string of words without any spaces. They will show up in a different color on your screen. Hashtags are used as search mechanisms. If you click

on the hashtag word, it will take you to a screen with all of the posts that include that same hashtag. This helps with topic searches.

For example, if you click on the hashtag #ranchlife, you'll find plenty of tweets about funny mishaps, management tips, sources for finding hay, etc. Another way to use hashtags is to flag tweets about certain events. For instance, we used #StoryofaSteak and #AngusConvention

during last fall's national Angus convention. #Beefmeet will be a hashtag for tweets from the Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show the first week of February. Hashtags are also popular on Instagram, and gaining ground on Facebook, but Twitter originated the hashtag.

If you want to see a sampling of the latest tweets posted by Angus Media here in Saint Joseph, take a look at the *Angus Journal* website at www.angusjournal.com. Scroll down till you see an "Angus Communications" header with a little blue bird in the right column.

Twitter also has ways to interact by means of "favoriting" a tweet. This is similar to a like on Facebook. It shows the original poster that you enjoyed the post. "Retweeting" means that you are sharing someone else's tweet to your followers. You can also reply directly to someone's post.

Twitter is not like Facebook in that you can follow someone and they do not have to follow you back. Your Newsfeed will include all posts from whomever you follow in chronological order, starting with the most recent.

Instagram: This is a newer social media platform (<http://instagram.com>) than Facebook and Twitter, but it is gaining popularity. Instagram is a more visual platform; posts are solely of photos with captions. It is like Twitter in that you can follow people who do not have to

mutually follow you. You can like photos by clicking the heart symbol. You can also comment on photos.

Photos can be posted with a "filter." There are 19 premade filters that can change the lighting or mood of the posted photo.

Pinterest: Pinterest (www.pinterest.com) is another newer platform. Pinterest acts as an electronic bulletin board. Users can create boards to help organize "pins." Pins can be websites, blog posts, recipes, craft ideas or any number of things. The pin generally has a strong visual aspect, but clicking on the pin can take the user to the full post.

There are many ways to stay in touch with the American Angus Association and Angus Media via social media.

The Association has a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/americanangusassociation, Twitter account at @AngusAssoc, Instagram at <http://instagram.com/angusassoc>, and Pinterest at www.pinterest.com/angusassoc/.

Angus Media accounts include an *Angus Journal* Facebook, www.facebook.com/AngusJournal, and Twitter at @AJeditor and @ABBeditor.

Certified Angus Beef LLC's industry information team has these accounts: Facebook, www.facebook.com/BlackInkBasics; Twitter, @BlackInkBasics; and Instagram, <http://instagram.com/blackinkbasics>.