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# Association Commentary

by Dr. Bob Hough, Executive Secretary

We are experiencing tremendous times in the Red Angus business. Bull sales this spring have been tremendous with unprecedented demand, and this value is being born out in sale barns and video auctions where feeder calves now regularly top markets. The demand for Red Angus is no fluke. It has taken years of forward thinking, early adoption of technology and often running against the grain of the traditional purebred beef industry. As one breeder put it, "The Red Angus Association doesn't act like a breed association and that's why I like it." However, this is not just RAAA being contrary for the sake of being different; rather, it has been guided by an amazingly forward thinking set of Core Policies and a dynamic Strategic Planning Process. Red Angus is defined in the market place as an innovative, crossbreeding friendly, performance breed with a commercial focus.

While things are moving along wonderfully, we always have a contingent of breeders who desire a more traditional breed association. Regarding an anonymous e-mail circulated downgrading the Joint Venture, I would like to quote a response by Willie Altenburg: "...I believe in cross breeding for commercial beef production and the joint venture effort. Breeds (and breed associations) are in existence for one reason to produce a portion of the genetics to serve those herds and crossbreeding. The 'progressive' breed associations take a forward thinking attitude to help serve that commercial effort. I like that attitude of Red Angus and why I am a member...I would ask you and your group reconsider your stance in this area. You have the opportunity to be a part of a progressive breed association or be traditional thinking and watch the demise of your organization."

The other topic brought-up in an anonymous e-mail is multibreed EPDs. If we are going to serve the

commercial cattle industry in crossbreeding systems, we simply must have a language that can be read between breeds. The system we have now is just too complicated. Here are the cold hard facts of multibreed EPDs:

- 1) American Angus Association has voted to form a company to run multi-breed EPDs.
- 2) Simmental along with Chianina and Maine-Anjou has been running a pooled multi-breed NCE at Cornell for approximately eight years.
- 3) Both Limousin and Gelbvieh are running multi-breed NCE models at Georgia.
- 4) Approximately 15 breeds are involved in the National Consortium's pooled data, multi-breed prototype NCE.

Regardless of the Joint Venture for Genetic Performance Solutions, we must face facts that multi-breed National Cattle Evaluations are a new reality in our industry.

Red Angus is a unique breed. Although primarily composed of 1-A breeders, which I do not see changing, it has a category system which welcomes a variety of cattle to meet various market demands. This has been in place since 1978. Talk about being farsighted! We should welcome this diversity and the strength that it brings to the RAAA.

Let us look forward to a bright future instead of backwards through rose colored glasses. Let us not fall into the trap of traditional purebred breed association thinking, but ever remain the innovators. After all, that is what Red Angus is all about.

### Clarification

In last month's column I stated that THR was a Board decision. This is a correct statement. However, a straw poll was taken of the membership at convention, at which time the membership did endorse THR. ■