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Board Commentary

by Steve Andras, RAAA President

Many articles on crossbreeding seem to suggest that the concept is fairly new. Quite the opposite is true, and to stress the necessity of crossbreeding in an article to Red Angus breeders would be superfluous. Do I think Red Angus breeders should be crossbreeders? No. Our customers? Yes. We are the factory that produces a pure, integral part of the efficient machine known as beef production. We hold in our hands one of the last, pure, identifiable beef breeds that can be objectively discerned. In 1965, if you drove down the highway and saw a herd of solid black cattle, it was quite safe to say that you were looking at an Angus herd. In 2007, driving down that road, seeing a herd of solid black cows, you may well be staring at any number of "pure" breeds.

With America's beef herd turning black -oddly, as a means to compete with black Angus- Red Angus breeders have a strong message that should be directed not only at our neighboring producers, but to a market that is vastly larger than America's beef producers.

What is that message, you ask? It's the same message that has kept Red Angus in the mainstream of beef production: efficiency, longevity, docility, calving-ease, carcass quality and maternal virtue.

Where and who is this "vastly larger" audience whose heterosis puzzle can find completion in Red

Angus? The beef producers around the globe. America produces a relatively small percentage of the global beef production. In fact, a significant percentage of the world's cattle numbers can be found in the extremely hot climates from zero to 40 degrees latitude, both North and South of the equator.

While America works tirelessly to paint its cowherd ever black, the rest of the hot climate world (whose cattle numbers dwarf ours) would be forced to seek its source for heterosis (for the above mentioned traits) elsewhere, if not for Red Angus. Perhaps instead of only focusing within, fighting the hide-color war in America, we should take the proactive approach and open our eyes to how truly valuable and influential Red Angus genetics can be. Where environment dictates hide color popularity--those that don't survive, won't be that popular.

These climates of extreme heat are a natural fit for Red Angus genetics. In an ever-globalizing world, Red Angus may well be the ticket that turns Nelore and Zebu beef into a palatable, acceptable protein staple on the world's plate. Your Red Angus Association has been diligent to keep our eyes open to the world market. In this modern day of the internet and through the use of electronic media, we have unprecedented access to the far reaches of our globe and our ability to advertise to this end is easier and more affordable than ever. ■