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Association Commentary

by Bob Hough,
RAAA Executive Secretary

This is the last Association Commentary I will be writing as your Executive Secretary. I have had a fun and fulfilling time serving for the past thirteen years, ten as Executive. I give my thanks to you, Red Angus breeders and customers, for the times I have succeeded, and my apologies for times I have fallen short. The best of luck to you in the future.

The Red Angus breed and its breeders have made tremendous gains over the past ten years. The breed has gone from a relatively minor breed to one that ranks fourth in the country. No other breed can match Red Angus on its percentage growth, and it has grown from a regional breed to a nation wide breed. Membership has increased in kind, and best of all, membership retention far out paces other breeds. Our EPDs are the envy of the industry, and working with Colorado State University, our embrace of Economically Relevant Traits has made our EPDs succinct and important to our customers' bottom lines. We have gone from a revolving door with staff to one that is stable and the envy of the industry. We were almost non existent in bull studs, and today a large quantity of top bulls can be found in almost any stud book. Most of all, feeder cattle have gone from being discounted to bringing premium prices on any of the major video auctions. Red Angus breeders produce practical cattle, ignoring industry fads and fancies. They embrace a breed with core policies that are grounded in the objective selection of cattle and a commercial focus for the breed. All of this has led to the ultimate goal of strong bull sales.

Two controversies during my tenure have been the desire to have more shows and the use of hybrid seedstock. Both discussions have been heartfelt, but ultimately distracted the breed from serving commercial customers. The show ring can be a good promotional tool and I enjoy watching and judging shows. But the fact is the breed was formed to move away from the undue influence of the show ring on cattle selection.

The other area of controversy is the use of hybrid bulls. I take nothing away from straight breeding and realize that a really tuned in program should continue doing what it is doing. However, Red Angus has a long history of supporting crossbreeding and the value of heterosis. I simply believe that most breeders that want to add continental breeding into their program usually can not afford the horse power of a 100 percent bull. This is where hybrids come in. The good thing is they can be produced by Red Angus breeders on demand.

I look forward to what comes next for

me. I have co-written a book on breeds of cattle (www.breedsforcattle.net), and look forward to doing some consulting. I wish to stay in contact with this wonderful breed, and I can be reached at bobhough1@aol.com or (817) 296-0976.

The Red Angus breed has definitely been the place to be. It has great cattle, tremendous breeders and wonderful people. I am proud of what we have as a staff has accomplished for you, and it has been my honor to lead such a team in service to you. I would like to conclude with the Core Polices. Follow them and the breed will always stay on the right track:

1. The policy of the Red Angus Association is to discourage the more artificial practices in purebred cattle production and to place its faith instead in objective tests, consisting for the most part of comparisons within herds of factors of known economic importance and known heritability. By making this an integral part of the registration system, Red Angus breeders feel that even faster progress can be made toward the ultimate goal of more efficient beef production.
2. It is the Association's primary role to promote the financial well being of its members, and uses this as the method for encouraging new membership.
3. The standing policy of the RAAA is that when the science exists to make a genetic prediction more precise and reliable, the science is implemented. This is overseen by technical committee and not the board of directors.
4. There is no proxy voting in the RAAA. This policy was established in the Constitutional & Bylaws at the onset of the Association to assure that voting members were fully informed and up-to-date through their attendance at the Annual Meeting.
5. The Association's general role in assisting marketing of the membership's cattle is to have the best objectively described cattle in the industry and to provide the best service to our members' customers (commercial producers). Although, RAAA promotes overall demand for the breed through activities such as national advertising, the Association does not take a role in the marketing of an individual member's cattle.
6. The Association has a long standing policy supporting planned crossbreeding and the use of heterosis.
7. The ARA Magazine is sent to all bull customers, so in general, the editorial content of the magazine has a commercial and technical focus, i.e. typical breed journal articles such as member profiles are avoided.
8. The role of the Association is to objectively describe reproduction, growth, maintenance and carcass traits utilizing the fewest EPDs possible to achieve this purpose. The concept of Economically Relevant Traits guides this process.
9. The RAAA actively seeks out and implements new technologies that are based on sound, scientific principles. ■