

# TOP 10 BEST PRACTICES EXPANDED - PICTURES IN A SALE BOOK CAN ADD VALUE. POOR PICTURES ARE WORSE THAN NO PICTURES.

In the 2023-2024 Missouri Angus Directory, we released the work of the Missouri Angus Association Industry Relations Committee's, "Top 10 Best Practices" for Regional Association Consignment Sales. The items are not listed in any particular order and are meant to aid consignment sales in running more effective, higher grossing sales that better fit the needs of buyers. This month, we expand upon the both the sixth and seventh items.

*By Julie Conover, Missouri Angus Association*

Do pictures speak louder than words? Or in the cattle marketing platform, clearer than a 3-generation pedigree or hand-crafted footnote? In so many cases, they truly do!

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With incredible technological advancements in regards to the opportunity to produce world-class genetic offerings, it becomes the small things that make a difference in the price a buyer is willing to pay for an animal. The American Angus Association has made it easy to log-in and sort through offspring that are exceptional in certain Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) in herds across the nation. With so many resources to be able to produce and market cattle, many times, it comes down to a first impression which keeps our interest or quickly allows us to transition onto something else.

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Living in the "Show-Me State", we really want someone to "show us" which can be in the form of photos or videos when it comes to marketing cattle. While thus far each of the best practices have been discussed separately, these two are a natural fit to tie together listing: 6. Pictures in a sale book can add

value. 7. Poor pictures are worse than no pictures.

In looking specifically at images, the Missouri Angus Association Industry Relations Committee developed these specific points as a way to assist fellow breeders:

- Professional photos help entice potential buyers to attend the sale.
- Whether it be a sale book or on social media, sale staff cannot undo the damage of a bad photo of an animal. Once published, it makes it harder to market the animal.

Don Birk, Missouri Angus Association member and owner of Birk Enterprises, has spent his career helping livestock breeders market their programs. Over the past fifty-one years, much of his visible work is as a ringman and a small script in images. Having captured many thousands of photographs in both film and with digital cameras, he states, "Many breeders are extremely good at managing their herds, selecting their seedstock and making breeding decisions to improve their marketing potential, but perhaps fall short in their marketing efforts."

Birk advocates, "The internet and social media platforms have made it possible to expose your product to an exponential number of potential customers at a very efficient low cost. This being said, it is very important that you give it your best shot at that marketplace. Now you can present your whole offering through pictures and videos and it is important that they make a good impression that grabs their attention."

While we all know it is important to present each animal to look their best from size, structure and body type, etc., that can be easier said than done. Birk provides this tip, "As each animal enters the photo pen, I immediately assess their strengths and weaknesses and strive to capture them at the best."

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We'll be the first to admit that taking photos has become easier with advanced cameras on cell phones. However, you do become limited in most cases with having high resolution, reproducible images and can become restricted with some adjustments to lighting challenges. In all honesty, there are reasons professional photographers are using digital cameras and taking numerous clicks to get the best shot possible.

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In all reality, rarely will you get the right look driving around in a pasture. The art of having the cow head facing the correct direction with the rear leg offset by yourself is truly a rare occurrence. Having help is usually essential. Birk comments, "Through the years, I have had many people help me in the photo pen and some actually sort of enjoy it, and some hate it, as it can be very frustrating. Some people comment on my patience, but I say it's not patience, I'm just too stubborn to let them win."

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If taking your own photos, patience is imperative. It is fundamental to have the right shot instead of just an image of the consignment. While it may sound blunt, just to be clear, when submitting photos to be used for cattle you are trying to market, at a minimum, they should not have the following in the photo with them: waterer, feeder, people, objects that look potentially hazardous, and/or another animal that is not its calf.

In consignment sales particularly, the quality of the photos submitted can be challenging. While there are two sides to a coin, sale managers know it takes time and effort to try to take photos of your own consignments or even bringing in help to assist you with the effort. The judgement call of the sale manager to include or reject an image or images in a sale book is

ultimately in the best interest of the consignor. What then can become challenging is when other breeders make statements like, "Did you see the picture of their lot on Facebook?" Some things are just worth waiting to see at the sale and are better off social media if the right image isn't available.

In closing, your program will be on display with the consignment(s) you offer. Make sure you are prepared and set yourself up to be successful on sale day by taking proactive steps in the months ahead of the sale. Maximize the value of your offering by providing sale managers with quality information and supporting image(s) that will help set your cattle apart and continually improve the sale. Stay tuned to the Trails for articles highlighting each of the top 10 practices.

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**These two photos were only taken five minutes apart. Lining up the animal correctly with the sun positioned behind the photographer and the animal with a different pose transform an okay photo to a great photo**

