

# Think Like an Order Buyer

By Joe Snyder

To get the best price for the cattle you're selling, put yourself in the boots of an order buyer. How then would you like to see cattle put together for sale?

First, remember that as brokers, order buyers make a living by buying and selling in quantity. Anytime cattle can be sold in load lots of around 50,000 pounds, there will be added value to the sale.

"The size of the lot is important, especially as expensive as fuel has become," says Jennings Steen, co-owner of Crossroads Cattle Company in Austin, Texas.

"Typically, our average haul is between 400 and 500 miles away, so with freight costing more, it's important to get a full truck load."

The best thing after quantity is to procure cattle that a particular customer is looking for, says Steen. "Most of the time I'm providing a service by supplying somebody with the type of cattle they want, and whatever a customer wants,

that's what I want to give him." For example, Steen says, there is currently a good market for "really fancy, all-black cattle, and for the very front end of English and exotic cross cattle."

Lesser quality cattle have a market as well, of course, and Steen says it is the job of a good order



buyer to find a market for every one of them. "One of our customers has a calf gathering facility; his buyers are sitting in local auctions buying them one at a time; he conglomerates them, makes a 'lot' of them and sells them as a group," Steen says. "We do some of that but we focus more on direct trade in the country. Any broker or order buyer might like real

front end cattle but at the end of day, if he's being paid by commission, he'll tell you that everything has a value. Price equalizes everything."

"If the cattle are all of one sex or size, and in sufficient numbers to make a load, that always adds value," says Bryan Prins of Prins Cattle Company in Sisseton,

S.D. "Everyone likes uniformity in cattle, whether it's breed, color, size ... uniformity in general of the cattle is ideal for an order buyer."

It's important for producers to be honest because their reputations are on the line, says Prins. "If I buy

Joe Blow's cattle and he tries to slip something through, like a steer with a bum leg, he may get it through the first time, but never again. I'll take responsibility as a buyer, but the next time Joe Blow tries to sell cattle, I'll remember it. Sell them the way you would like to receive them. Honesty is best in any business."



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