

## 'Our Topline Does More ...'

by Brad Parker

North American Limousin Foundation  
Director of Communications

Perhaps you already have seen the North American Limousin Foundation's (NALF's) new "Our Topline Does More..." advertisement in a state or regional ag publication or on the organization's Web site. If not, you surely will see it in the next few months as you peruse the pages of *BEEF*, *Drovers*, *Beef Producer*, *Beef Today*, *Working Ranch* and other national industry magazines.

NALF invested a year developing the new advertisement. Your board of directors and staff members started the process in April 2008 by evaluating the general beef industry; competing breeds; and our own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. That analysis served as the basis for the online commercial marketing survey NALF conducted in fall 2008. It drew input from nearly 300 cattle producers, 90 percent of whom were NALF members—those of you marketing Limousin and Lim-Flex® seedstock out in the country every day.

In September 2008, NALF took its preliminary analyses and survey results to David and Associates, a marketing-communications firm based in Hastings, Nebraska, that works with the likes of Cargill Meat Solutions, the National Corn Growers Association and Nutrena Feeds. Those folks helped determine the general direction for a new marketing campaign and to develop print advertisements. Along the way, they gathered extensive input from NALF board and staff members. One of them even attended the NALF Annual Meeting and National Western Stock Show in January to get feedback from the membership at large.

David and Associates submitted a nearly complete "Topline" concept in February. The Commercial Marketing and Advertising Committee then polished up the verbiage and turned to the experienced team at the *Limousin*

*World* to finalize the graphic elements.

In April, the NALF Board approved the advertisement to anchor the breed's three-year "Today's Limousin" marketing campaign. NALF and the agency will unveil another advertisement in summer 2010, but we will focus on the "Topline" message for now.

### Top to Bottom

One of the greatest challenges in developing a national advertisement is selecting a main graphic that represents the full spectrum of Limousin genetics. The "Topline" advertisement does that by emphasizing the breed's efficient muscle growth and the increased returns available to those who have flatlined with their overreliance on another breed.

The bull superimposed on the graph intentionally is transparent and somewhat ghostlike so he complements rather than detracts from the trend line while still conveying the breed's modern phenotype. The graph's background includes both of our major coat colors, and the bull's transparency allows him to take on each in different parts of his body. In black and white, he becomes completely color-neutral.

The body copy conveys the systemwide advantages of using Limousin genetics. In particular, NALF's market research highlighted the need to emphasize the breed's calving-ease, improved docility, efficient red-meat yield and production longevity. The agency laid out the text in a way that is reminiscent of the income column in an accounting ledger. The plus signs in the bulleted list reinforce that imagery. The initial call to action below the list spells out the concept: "Do the math."

The first part of the new tag line

subliminally asks readers to forget what they think they know about the breed and to give it a new look. The second part carries that reinvented perception into their personal breeding programs and goals for financial prosperity.

The ad committee felt it was important to remind the commercial sector about the full range of Limousin genetics available in our product line; therefore, we added the purebred and fullblood references to the main Limousin logo. We then positioned the Lim-Flex logo in such a way that reminds all of us inside and outside the breed that our hybrid is a complementary—not competing—product.

The final call to action below the logos sends readers to a special Web page that will allow NALF to track ad impressions. It also reminds them that their area Limousin breeders should be their final information destination.

As one last reminder that the Limousin breed includes both red and black coat colors, the new ad campaign reincorporates NALF's trade dress (the two bulls' heads). That image also renews ties to our Web site, promotional merchandise and literature.

### Coast to Coast

NALF will place the new advertisement on its own at least a dozen times this year, generating more than 1.5 million impressions. We will continue the partial-page approach to ad buying because the last campaign illustrated the effectiveness of bordering editorial content.

The Breeder Cooperative Advertising

Program again will make your regional advertising dollars go further. It allows NALF to cost-share 25 percent of qualifying ad expenses with groups of two to six breeders. Participating members piggyback on the national campaign to add multistate advertising to their own marketing programs for a fraction of the usual cost.

There are several guidelines to assure targeted, consistent messaging to commercial producers from region to region. They and the application form are in the “Programs” section of the NALF Web site, or contact me for more information.

NALF also helps state Limousin associations share a cohesive marketing message across the nation through the State Cooperative Marketing Program, which reimburses them up to half of qualifying expenses.

#### **1 on 1**

The national advertisements only can give commercial cattle producers a glimpse of the Limousin breed’s strengths and direction. We hope they then will call or visit our Web site so we can share more details. Actually selling Limousin seedstock, however, is up to you.

If you would like to add your own information to the NALF advertisement and use that as part of your individual marketing efforts, I am here to help. The design fee usually will be \$30 to \$50, and you will pay to get it printed.

The important thing—whether or not you use ad material from NALF—is that you advertise the genetics you produce to the commercial cattle producers in your area. The national campaign and the state and breeder co-ops help create a favorable marketing climate, but customers cannot buy anything until they can find a phone number or e-mail address for their local Limousin breeders.

When you sell animals, transfer the registrations so NALF can follow up with the *Bottom Line* newsletter and other customer services. Meanwhile, your registration, transfer, member-service and checkoff fees will help fund more breed advertising, and the cycle begins again. **LW**