



Roadside marketing

Farm signs are silent salesmen

GETTYSBURG — Ohio State University's marketing specialist for horticultural products, Dr. R.A. Blakeley, considers signs to be very important if roadside marketing is to be a success.

According to a study conducted at Ohio State, nearly 75 per cent of customers surveyed at an Ohio roadside market indicated that highway signs were the means by which

they had learned about the market. According to Blakeley, the content, appearance, location, construction, and visibility of the sign all contribute significantly to the sign's usefulness.

"Signs are silent salesmen," says the Ohio educator. With the season for fruit and vegetable production approaching rapidly, farmers may want to consider Blakeley's

suggestions. They're applicable, incidentally, for not just fruit and vegetable sales, but for all types of roadside marketing.

To be really effective, Blakeley says, the "silent salesmen" must attract attention in less than 10 seconds. "They must tell who you are, where you are, and what you have for sale."

"Novelty attracts attention," the Ohio educator tells his audiences all across

the country. "Along many highways, a bright, clean, neatly painted sign is a novelty in itself. Avoid blackboards, or messages scrawled in crayon on a piece of cardboard. They are hard to read and give the impression of a cheap, dirty market; not a place where you want to buy food. Avoid commercial signs for soft drinks, tobacco, etc., which destroy the farm fresh image. Signs which imitate highway department or traffic control signs in shape, colors, letter design

and wording should also be avoided," Blakeley says.

To enhance their appearance and increase their effectiveness, Blakeley recommends that signs be painted every three years, or sooner if they become weathered, faded, or damaged. "Shabby signs imply a sloppy, poorly managed market," the Ohio researcher emphasizes.

In detailing proper sign making, Blakely instructs that signs should encourage the motorist to shop your market. "Listing a variety of

products will attract more customers than having a sign which merely says "vegetables," he says. He recommends that roadside marketers use hand-separated product signs with hooks or snaps and eyes so that they can be easily taken down when that product is no longer available. "Leaving signs advertising 'grapes,' 'peaches' or 'strawberries' out all Winter is an easy way to lose customers next season," he warns.

"Give your market a

(Turn to Page 102)

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