



by Shane Bedwell, chief operating officer and director of breed improvement

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Confidence in Genomics

I would like to start off by congratulating Shaw Cattle Co., Caldwell, Idaho, for being named the 2016 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Seedstock Producer of the Year. The Shaw family is a long-time Hereford breeder and very deserving of this prestigious award.

The Hereford breed had a great presence during the three-day annual BIF Annual Meeting and Research Symposium hosted in Manhattan, Kan. — from the cover of the program that displayed a group of Hereford pairs grazing on green flint hills grass to Hereford being complimented for its participation in and the quality of data submitted for the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Feed Efficiency Project.

Also, a morning session focused on producer profit that was centered on the cow-calf side. The Hereford trait Sustained Cow Fertility (SCF) was highlighted as an effective expected progeny difference (EPD) that producers can use as a selection tool that effectively measures long-term female success within the herd. For more information on SCF, visit Hereford.org/content/sustained-cow-fertility.

In addition, there were several breakout sessions that talked about the value of genomics. Genomic-enhanced EPDs (GE-EPDs) are a tool that more and more seedstock procedures are utilizing in their programs, and rightfully so.

Recently I summarized the 2016 spring bull sale season, as I was curious to see the value of bulls with GE-EPDs versus bulls that did not have GE-EPDs. Data were pulled from 56 Hereford production sales across the United States.

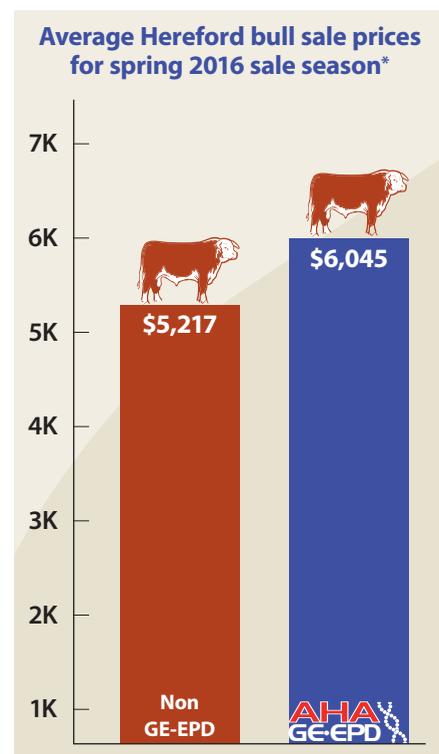
With this data, I set a maximum sale price of \$15,000 in an attempt to better evaluate what commercial cattlemen were selecting and why. From the data, 3,728 bulls brought \$15,000 or less and more than 45% were sold with GE-EPDs. The price difference came to an \$828 advantage when comparing GE-EPD bulls to non GE-EPD bulls, respectively.

This is a sizeable difference when considering profit potential for future sales. But more importantly, GE-EPDs offer customers the most reliable and accurate information available. You see the big advantage to an animal that has a GE-EPD profile compared to one that doesn't is the boost in accuracy that is gained. On average for Hereford animals, it is like having four to 12 progeny already born, depending on the trait. Considering that most bulls are sold as yearlings, or "non-parents," this reduces the risk of the EPD values changing. Think of it as fewer false starts.

As seedstock breeders, understand that selling an animal with GE-EPDs does not guarantee it will bring a premium. In my opinion it is an additional step that you can take that

highlights the quality of phenotype and genetics of your operation.

As commercial breeders, look more closely at bottom lines. Bulls with GE-EPDs offer more confidence and the opportunity for commercial cattlemen to make genetic progress quicker. **HW**



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