

Certified Hereford Beef Launches PREMIUM PROGRAM



CHB meets the need of food service and retail industries with a top choice program.

by *Kayla M. Wilkins*

Since 1995, Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) has worked with American ranchers to provide families a unique eating experience with high-quality Hereford beef. The program has

grown and evolved over the last 22 years into one of the premier branded-beef programs worldwide.

In January of this year, CHB partnered with National Beef to launch the CHB Premium program.

This program was developed to provide food service and retail customers seeking a premium product a top-choice option. As a result, implementation of the program is designed to expand the customer base of CHB and to provide a competitive advantage to those companies employing the program.

“Our goal is to target chefs and operators who are wanting a unique, differentiated, breed specific, top-choice program,” says CHB Chief Operating Officer Amari Manning. “We believe the Certified Hereford Beef Premium program encompasses all of that.”

The next level

Foundationally, CHB has a list of carcass specifications ensuring the consistent quality of the product. Manning says those specifications remain the same in the premium program, but there is more emphasis on marbling.

“The only point of difference is we have higher marbling content for those operators that want to market and promote a top choice program,” Manning explains. “The classic program is the foundation of the CHB program and the CHB Premium program is an enhancement that provides options based on the operator needs.”

The added marbling requirement aids CHB in being more relevant in today’s marketplace. With the demand from the industry for higher quality products in recent years, this program enables CHB to enhance its competitive market share.

To meet requirements for the premium program, animals must meet 10 carcass specifications set up with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The carcass must have a modest or higher marbling score,

a medium to fine marbling texture, a ribeye size of 10 to 16 inches, “A” maturity and less than one inch of fat thickness in addition to a hot carcass weight of 1,050 lb. or less with no capillary rupture. There can be no dark cutters, and animals must have less than a 2-inch neck hump and must have moderately thick or thicker muscling.

According to Wes Steimel, National Beef business manager, the program fills a void that has been apparent in today’s industry. Food service entities and retailers are demanding a high-quality, consistent program, so CHB is delivering.

“Customers want something different, but they want to market it as an upper two-thirds, high-choice program,” he notes. “That is really where the need or void was in the marketplace because that unique, breed-specific, upper two-thirds program didn’t really exist.”

For Steimel this innovative program has spurred excitement. He says it is not often packers come across the opportunity to work with a program that is so unique to the marketplace. Using this avenue to add value for customers and end-users has created much enthusiasm moving forward.

“It will open doors for Certified Hereford Beef to get into customers and accounts that we weren’t able to before, because their threshold to even look at a program may have been an upper two-thirds program,” he explains. “Hereford choice is a great program, and it would outperform a lot of the other upper two-thirds programs in the industry. By reaching that minimum specification, those customers will now look at it.”

Meeting a need

The program has already proven itself with customers in a positive way. Kern Meat Co., St. Louis, Mo., has been committed to providing quality beef in the foodservice industry across the Midwest since the company’s inception in 1948. It has been carrying CHB since 2008 and notes it as one of the best

business decisions the company has made over the years.

“Certified Hereford Beef is a rock-solid performer every single time and as a result have grown exponentially because of that,” says Matthew Sherman, Ph.D., Kern Meat Co. general manager. “Partnering with Certified Hereford Beef was probably the best overall business decision that we’ve made in the last 10 years.”

Historically, CHB has received rave reviews from customers with Kern Meat. Sherman says the positive feedback is a result of the consistently high-quality product CHB offers. However, his customers were demanding something more.

For him the premium program has opened doors to new accounts and met the need of customers seeking a top-choice product. Sherman says the need has been there for a number of years and this program definitely fits the bill for many of his customers.

“In getting feedback from my customers,” Sherman explains, “CHB Premium basically checks every box that I need to make a sale and convert people to using Hereford. Once they use it they stick with it.”

Sherman says Kern Meat is an established customer of CHB, and he is enthusiastic about the future with the addition of the premium program.

“I see a long-standing organization that will continue to have a significant place in the market with the addition of CHB Premium,” Sherman explains, “and with the introduction of more value-added CHB products, it will only get better for Certified Hereford Beef and its partners.”

For the producer

The implementation of the premium program would not be possible without the supply from American ranchers. One

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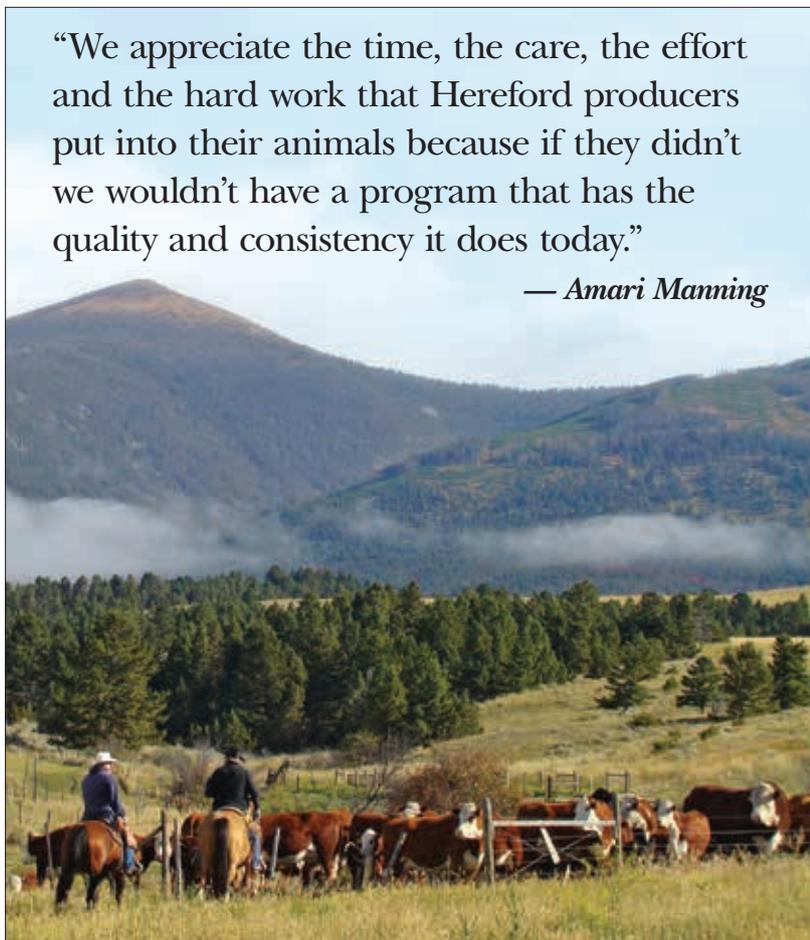


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overarching mission of CHB is to promote the Hereford breed, and this program aligns with that vision.

“The program was initially created as a way to market Hereford animals for producers,” Manning notes, “With the launch of the premium program, it is incentivizing the Hereford producers to ensure they are producing high quality cattle.”

The addition of the premium program provides new avenues for CHB to continue striving toward the brand’s foundational mission. Trey Befort, the American Hereford Association’s (AHA) director of commercial programs, says this program provides ample opportunity and incentive for Hereford producers to raise higher-quality beef to meet the demand in today’s marketplace.

“Consumers have shifted their focus a little bit,” he notes. “The demand for a higher quality grade, higher marbled piece of beef has become more desirable, so these

higher choice programs have become more popular and are more in demand. Being able to hit those markets with those animals gives more opportunity to add value.”

Progressive genetics utilized by producers in recent years have been a vital piece of CHB expanding and offering such a high-quality product to customers. Producers wishing to raise cattle that qualify have tools available to them through AHA such as the CHB Profit Index (CHB\$) along with other selection criteria. Because quality grade is a focus of the premium program, Befort recommends producers place emphasis on marbling without single trait selecting.

“I would encourage producers to pay attention to the Certified Hereford Beef index and, at the same time, how the marbling plays into the CHB index as the index is a great indicator of growth and end product merit,” he notes. “I would say using those two things together would be a great way to

improve the quality and have a better opportunity to hit the CHB premium markets or requirement.”

The launch of this program has a multitude of benefits for not only CHB but also those in all facets of the industry from farm to table. Those individuals can all agree there is a bright future ahead for CHB and the Hereford breeders supplying the product to make this program possible.

“We appreciate the time, the care, the effort and the hard work that Hereford producers put into their animals because if they didn’t we wouldn’t have a program that has the quality and consistency it does today,” Manning explains.

“At the end of the day, it is all about the consumer and we want to be able to provide a wholesome, healthy and consistent product for them. The quality just continues to improve, and we are looking toward the future of being able to serve our customers with the best quality available in the industry.” **HW**