



The Black Baldie: America's Most Favored Cow



The headline states, “Crossbreeding Is Becoming Cool Again,” and the article reads, “Sustainability and genetic selection’s tremendous untapped potential.” Have you noticed what appears to be resurgent interest in Hereford and making traditional black baldies?

These titles and articles I have read over the past few months are just reminders of the value of heterosis. The commercial cow herd may have gotten away from this practice over the past few years but are turning back to the

concept that was endorsed by Cundiff and Gregory at the U.S Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) nearly two decades ago.

They wrote, “... heterosis can be used to increase calf weight weaned per cow exposed by 20%. Crossbred cows remain in the herd 1.3 years longer and have a 30% greater lifetime production than straight bred cows.”

These two things alone can be broken down even further to prove that through the advantages of crossbreeding, sustainability can be obtained because cattlemen will be able to do more with

less, which will keep them profitable and environmentally sound.

The American Hereford Association (AHA) has entered into several various research projects over the past few years that have also proven the benefits of crossbreeding just like those at the USMARC. Projects at Simplot Livestock Co., Circle A Ranch, Amana Farms and Harris Ranch have shown that crossbred progeny have benefits for calf health and vigor, disposition, pregnancy, feed intake, and end-product performance through HCW (hot carcass weight) and gain. For more information, visit Hereford.org. Under the “Commercial” tab click on “Value of Hereford Genetics.”

These are just a few of the areas of improvement. You can find individual breeds that may have advantages at any single trait, but it is impossible to prove that any single breed can be more profitable through all stages of production.

The AHA recently released a new national ad campaign that will be a series of testimonials from industry leaders that have utilized Hereford genetics in their programs (see Page 64). “He Wants It All,” is the tag line, so you should take it.

The AHA is in its 15th year of the Whole Herd Total Performance Record (TPR™) program. This performance program has allowed the membership and industry to identify Hereford genetics that can and will perform in various environments.

In addition, the genomic component now adds to the reliability of younger cattle. Not one set of genetics will fulfill the needs of everyone, and, as we continue to add traits, it will become important for seedstock breeders to understand their customers and to make the genetic change they need. It would be very useful for breeders to educate customers on the importance of \$Indexes and how they can be utilized for selection within a given breeding scheme so that buyers do not single-trait select.

As the industry starts to expand the national cow herd, Hereford can play a great role because just as Jess Herbers, Goose Creek Valley Farms, Va., states in the “He Wants It All” campaign, “the reason a tried and true black baldie is still the most favored cow in America’s cow herd is that she is accountable, predictable, profitable and sustainable. **HW**