

Good Doin' Cattle

For more than a century, Wiese & Sons has been raising problem-free Hereford bulls and females that are selected to be efficient, profitable beef cattle.

by *Angie Stump Denton*

With the goal of developing productive cattle that will grow well on forage and in the feedlot, with a nominal amount of maintenance and input, Wiese & Sons, Manning, Iowa, has enjoyed more than 100 years in the Hereford business producing “Good Doin’ Cattle.”

Four generations of Wieses, with the fifth generation in training, have worked together to produce solid, dependable Hereford cattle.

“We are dedicated to the Hereford breed, and truly believe

in the advantages of Hereford cattle,” says Gene Wiese, the current senior-generation member of the Wiese team. “Our priority is to produce bulls that go to the commercial industry and produce the best beef-improving and problem-free cattle possible.”

Through the years the Wiese family has been recognized for its commitment to the Hereford and beef industries. Wiese & Sons was selected by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association to receive the Region III Environmental

Stewardship Award and the cherished Cattle Business of the Century Award.

Wiese & Sons was recognized at the 2012 American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting with the Century Hereford Breeder Award. At that same meeting, Gene was inducted into the Hereford Hall of Fame, an honor his father, Lester, also received in 1980.

Looking back

In 1894 brothers Ed and Albert Wiese purchased their first



Lester, Gene, Ed and Sam Wiese.



The next generation of Wiese men is in training. Pictured (l to r) are: Chance, Dave, Gene, Shayne and Trey.

PHOTO BY NANCY CROGHAN

Since 1904 the Wiese family has made its home in the gently rolling hills of west-central Iowa near Manning.

Hereford bull. Then in 1904 Ed Wiese settled east of Manning.

The Wiese brothers started producing registered Hereford cattle in 1912, and in 1918, operating under the name of Ed Wiese & Son, the ranch management changed to Ed Wiese (father) and Lester Wiese (son).

Lester and his two sons, Sam and Gene, continued this Hereford tradition, and in 1949 began the firm of Wiese & Sons. Expansion of the firm began to take place in the 1960s. The partnership currently includes Gene Wiese and and his wife, Jean; daughter Helen Wiese; and son Dave Wiese and Dave's wife, Diana, and their boys, Chance, Shayne and Trey. Another daughter, Kathryn, and her son, Kieran, live in Hawaii but enjoy time on the farm and help when they can.

When asked why his family has continued in the Hereford business for more than 100 years, Gene explains, "Herefords were a clear choice because of the value of total lifetime efficiency from the factory (the cow) to the feedlot, the processor and the consumer."

Their program

"Bulls are our business," Gene says with conviction.

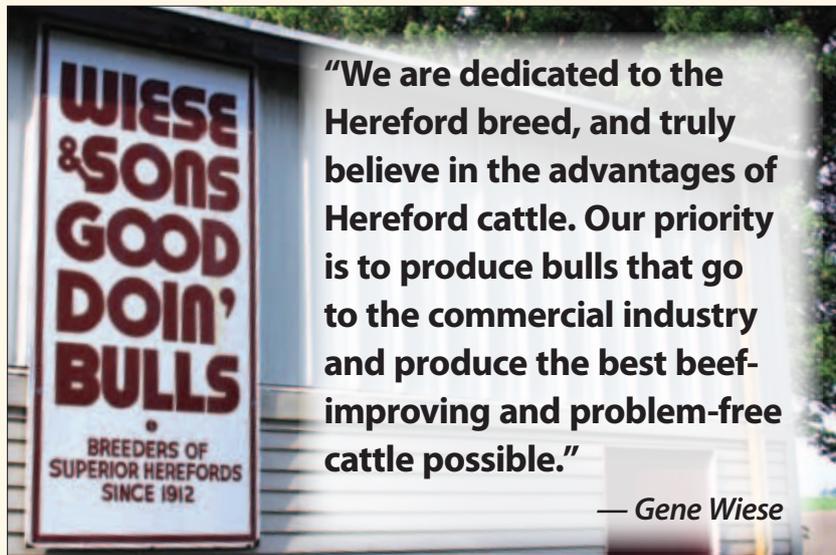
The Wieses market more than 100 Hereford bulls annually and offer both polled and horned bulls. For the last 10 years, they have dehorned their bulls. Gene says this practice was implemented to make the bulls easier to handle and to decrease time and resources related to horn management.

Bulls are developed on a high roughage ration in large lots. They are appraised for structure, condition, efficiency, fertility and disposition.

At weaning time, weights are collected as well as disposition scores. If at that time Gene or Dave doesn't think a bull will make the grade, that bull is sent to the feedlot.

After weaning, bulls are put on a feed trial until they become yearlings. When yearling weights

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The headquarters operation includes 400 registered cows, but generally 175 yearling and 2-year-old bulls are sold each year by private treaty, thanks, in part, to additional cooperator herds.



The Wiese family (pictured front row, l to r) are: Shayne, Gene and Jean. Back row (l to r) are: Chance, Trey, Dave, Diana and Helen.

PHOTO BY NANCY CROGHAN



Gene Wiese says a great trait of the Hereford breed is its efficiency. Hereford cows are the best at surviving drought, and they breed back under difficult conditions.

are collected, weight per day of age (WDA) is determined, and each bull is also evaluated for disposition, soundness and structure.

Gene says structure, as well as condition, is important because good structure allows a bull a long career in the pasture. They do not feed the bulls to be overly fat so that the bulls won't go out and melt during their first breeding season.

Although bulls are Wieses' focus, the female is not forgotten.

Gene says he can remember his grandfather telling him, "I've never known a good man who didn't have a good mother."

Currently the Wiese herd numbers 400 registered females. They keep about 80 heifers each year.

A majority of the Wiese females calve in March with a 90-day calving period. They also have a small group

of January calvers and another group that calves in September.

Their breeding program is based on propagating specific family lines. The families their cow herd is based on are Beau Blanchard 29th; Rex Mischief; Anxiety Domino 1928; Battle Spartan 1940, used on an Intense Domino-based cow herd to develop the Battle Intense line; and Big Northern, a 1970s sire of Grand Slam and King Ten.

Each year a group of replacement heifers is bred to an Angus bull to produce baldies. "We can't produce enough of the baldies," Gene says. "We have implemented this process to be able to show our customers the baldie calves so they then will want to produce them as well."

Management plan

Wiese & Sons is a progressive herd that extensively utilizes artificial insemination (AI), embryo transfer (ET) and ultrasound. In-depth records are kept on all cattle.

Through the years, the Wiese family has made changes in management practices to fit the needs of both its customers and the Wiese family.

Data collection has been a priority at Wiese & Sons for more than 50 years. "Data collection is so vital to us and when we are selling," Gene says. "The more data we have the better we are at marketing."

At calving, Wieses collect more than birth weights to help them evaluate a female. Along with birth weights, they record an udder score, a calving ease score and a calf vigor score; and they've also developed mothering ability and pigmentation scoring systems.

Production records combined with current technologies such as ultrasound and carcass evaluation help the Wieses work toward a goal of producing an animal that will predictably benefit the industry. The Wieses started gathering carcass data 20 years ago.

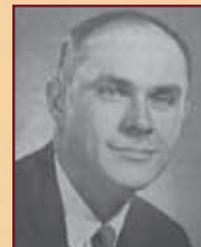
"Our production volumes and efficiencies have increased," Dave says. "Because of these extra efforts, our carrying capacity has increased 25% in the last decade and our yearling weight EPDs (expected progeny differences) have doubled."

Herefords in demand

Gene says they are currently experiencing an increased demand for Hereford bulls. He attributes this demand to the nation's black cow herd.

He says that through the years, the beef industry has seen a lot of change — from short coupled, compact cattle to introduction of European breeds — which lead to a mongrelized cow herd. Then the industry turned to the Angus bull to improve uniformity and carcass quality. Now, with a majority of the

Timeline



1894

First Hereford bull purchased by Wiese Bros. — Ed and Albert Wiese

1904

Ed Wiese and family moved to Manning, Iowa

1912

Ed Wiese & Son started in the Hereford seedstock business

1916

First ad placed in *American Hereford Journal*

1948

Wiese & Sons — Lester, Sam (Millicent), Gene (Jean)

1970

Gene Wiese American Hereford Association president



All bulls are sold private treaty so the Wieses have the opportunity to get to know their customers and their needs. When buyers visit Wiese & Sons, they are given a clipboard with pedigree and performance data (as is pictured here) and are encouraged to walk through the bulls.



Most bulls are sold as yearlings but some are sold as coming 2-year-olds. Before Wiese bulls qualify for the "sale pen," they are evaluated for disposition, soundness, fertility, conformation and muscle. They must also have the genetic ability to produce females with mothering ability, milking ability, reproductive efficiency and calving ease.

national cow herd being black or Angus-based, the Hereford bull is the logical choice to add heterosis, according to Gene.

"The Hereford bull is the answer from a conversion and consumption standpoint," he says. "The combination of Hereford and Angus produces the most efficient and productive commercial female today — the black baldie — what we call 'America's Cow.'"

The Wieses generally offer 175 yearling and 2-year-old Hereford and Angus bulls each year. Cooperator herds provide additional sale bulls.

Adding options

Wieses added Angus to their bull offering more than 25 years ago at a time when the demand for Hereford bulls began to decrease.

Gene says this decrease started when the Hereford industry had some issues. Hereford breeders have

overcome those issues and current demand is on the increase.

Wieses sell approximately 50 Angus bulls each year. The Angus bulls are produced mostly by cooperator herds in Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland, which expand the marketing opportunities for these Eastern producers.

"Offering Angus gives our customers more choices when making their seedstock decisions," Gene says. "We understand that one of the most popular and profitable crosses is the black baldie thus offering both Hereford and Angus bulls allows our customers to have the opportunity to visit one location and get both breeds."

Customer service

Developing relationships with their customers is a top priority for the Wiese family.

"An advantage of selling private treaty

since 1923 is that we learn a lot from our buyers," Helen says. "We really try to determine what we have to offer that will suit their needs."

Gene says the reasons they have chosen to sell private treaty instead of hosting a production sale are: 1) They are located in the Corn Belt, where a majority of their neighbors are farmers, not cattle producers. 2) They want to attract customers who want a number of bulls and 3) Selling private treaty allows them to get to know their customers better, which they believe leads to more repeat customers.

Export business has also been a market for the Wiese family. They have marketed live animals, semen and embryos to producers in foreign countries. Through the years, according to Helen, the Wiese family

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1976

Grand Slam named champion bull at the National Western



1980

Lester Wiese was inducted into the Hereford Heritage Hall of Fame



1992

Wiese & Sons partnership formed — Gene, Jean, Helen, Dave and Diana

1996

NCBA Environmental Stewardship Award, Region III

2000

NCBA Cattle Business of the Century Award, Region III

2012

Gene Wiese inducted into Hereford Hall of Fame

has sold genetics to most U.S. states and more than 15 foreign countries.

“Satisfied customers are always a major priority,” Gene adds.

The showing

Exhibiting at major shows was an important part of the Wiese’s marketing program in the 1960s through 2000. Gene says the family exhibited at shows throughout the country including the National Western Stock Show, where they had much success through the years.

Dave explains that although his family members loved the showing, they made a decision to focus their efforts on family activities and other projects around the farm.

Stewards of the land

Making an effort to improve the land for the next generation is an important challenge for the Wiese family. Because of their commitment to caring for the land, the Wieses were recognized by the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) as the 1996 NCBA Region III Environmental Stewardship Award winner.

Gene says winning the stewardship award was a huge honor for his family.

Soil conservation and land fertility has been a priority and has been achieved through the use of good soil and pasture management practices. Their conservation program started with early involvement in contour farming. Extensive terraces (32,000 feet) have been built on acres that were considered highly erodible.



The Wiese family continues to expand its operation as it prepares for the fifth generation to join the business. In 2002, 1,000 acres was purchased near Guthrie Center. The family has worked together to clean up the pastures and facilities.

Forage is the Wieses’ principal crop, and the quality and care of this crop is directly related to cattle productivity and efficiency. Several of their pastures have been in continual grass since 1904. Plant diversity has been achieved by interseeding a variety of legumes and grasses. Rotational grazing has been practiced since 1982. Weed management is an important part of pasture care and has been achieved by clipping and the interseeding of legumes and grasses to offer active competition to weeds. Limited spraying is practiced.

The evaluation of their pastures regarding plant population, diversity, vigor, number of legumes and usage helps them make decisions regarding fertilization, interseeding, weed management and herd rotation.

Water management practices have been accomplished through the use of water collection systems — four pond systems have been built. Streambank protection has been achieved by the

use of riprap, grasses and limited cattle access to natural water areas. Establishing wetland areas has improved water quality in the ponds, protected wells, and significantly retarded soil erosion and flood damage. Their tree planting program began with the development of their first pond in 1964. More than 300 trees have been planted annually for more than 15 years in an area of Iowa that was virtually treeless.

Looking forward

Since 1912 the Wiese family has been building and sustaining a reputation for top-quality, efficient and profitable beef cattle. Dave says his hope and plan is to continue to grow and expand Wiese & Sons so they can continue to partner with the next generation to keep Wiese & Sons in the Hereford business for another century or two. **HW**

Gene Wiese: Serving the industry

Through the years, while building and expanding Wiese & Sons, Gene Wiese has also given of his time and resources to support the Hereford and beef industries.

Gene served on the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board of Directors from 1966 to 1972 and was the AHA president in 1970-1971. He has also served as director and president of the Iowa Cattlemen’s Association and Iowa Hereford Association and as a director and committee chair for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. He was appointed as a member of the Iowa Water, Air and Waste, later the Department of

Natural Resources, and to the state Easter Seal Society.

Gene was inducted into the Hereford Hall of Fame Nov. 3, 2012, in Kansas City, Mo., at the AHA Annual Meeting. The Hall of Fame honor annually recognizes breeders who’ve dynamically influenced the direction and advancement of the Hereford breed.

He has been named an Iowa Master Farmer, received the AGR (Alpha Gamma Rho) Century Award and was recognized as an Iowa State University distinguished alumnus. **HW**

