



Commit to Genetic Improvement

Ring in a new year is exciting and gives us a chance to set some goals, make some New Year's resolutions and speculate about what is in store for us in the upcoming months.

2017 is especially exciting as we welcome a new administration, and no matter what side of the aisle you were on, it also eliminates the negativity that was associated throughout the election. For cattlemen, it gives us an opportunity to read the tarot cards and to forecast the markets not only for the price of cattle but for input costs associated with profitability.

As the new administration takes shape, there appears to be a real focus on changing the complexion of some of the regulatory agencies such as the EPA, the IRS and others that certainly have an impact on beef producers' everyday

lives. For instance, the estate tax and how families will be able to pass along farms and ranches are always issues, and they seem to finally have the attention of those that can set policy to make this process much more favorable.

On top of policy and regulation, the beef consumer gets more and more removed from agriculture and has a huge effect on how our industry needs to be tailored to best market our product.

In the United States, only about 5% of our population is involved in production agriculture, meaning very few of our customers have a real idea of how their food is produced — and some have concerns. This situation is certainly challenging because U.S. food and agriculture industries have a commitment to food safety and quality.

With this in mind, cattlemen need to understand that the consumer does have an influence on their business and that that influence extends past food quality and nutrition. Today's U.S. consumer wants to know how the animals have been raised and what they have been fed.

As seedstock producers, we have to ask ourselves how we can affect these issues with the cattle we select for our commercial customers. That question is really easy to answer — be committed to genetic selection for all traits of economic relevance.

It starts with calving ease and progresses through growth, efficiency, disposition and end product. Then along the way, you must keep in mind the maternal value associated with replacement retention. All of these traits are important no matter what

your customers' marketing goals might be. If your customers are marketing calves at weaning, it is still important for you to keep in mind postweaning gain and end product because, ultimately, these are areas where their cattle will be judged.

As we welcome 2017, I promise you that the staff at the American Hereford Association will be committed to providing you the tools to continue making genetic improvement and to allow you to provide well-documented genetics for your customers. How those tools are adopted and utilized will be totally up to each breeder, but I challenge you to make the New Year's resolution to be more committed to your customers and to provide them with the information required to keep them profitable and engaged.

Happy New Year to all! **HW**