



Make New Year's Resolutions to Benefit You and Your Herd

At the beginning of each new year, most of us take the time to set a few goals or, at least, make a few resolutions. During the course of the year, most will either consciously or unconsciously implement a few of these resolutions. I am envious of those of you who can look back and say you accomplished what you set out to do. In most cases, I have a hard time even remembering on Dec. 31 what I had wanted to achieve in January.

In the beef business, it is somewhat difficult to set a lot of short-term goals that will show immediate benefit.

However, let's set a few goals for our breeding programs that will ultimately affect our individual herds and, in turn, make an impact on the breed.

Before we make our resolutions, it would be beneficial to understand our goals and what we hope to accomplish. Breeders need to remember that the average purebred breeder herd size is less than 20 head, so regardless of your size, you are a part of the business. Your list of goals could look like the following:

1. Breed as many of my cows as I can with artificial insemination (AI).
2. Collect all measurable traits and become a Gold Total Performance Records (TPR) breeder.

3. Participate in a Hereford-influenced feeder calf sale.
4. Market all of my calves for a premium.
5. Positively change my genetics to better produce the cattle my customers demand.

Obviously, this is a short list, but it is made to make you think a bit. After looking at your list, you should sit down and come up with some resolutions that will help you accomplish your goals. So, here are a few answers that I came up with for the goals above:

1. Even though I am terribly busy, I can set a couple of days aside this spring to synchronize my cows and select a highly proven AI sire to breed my cows. I could even use more than one sire in order to fit the cows to a specific bull.
2. Gold TPR status is a tremendous accomplishment, but I actually collect data to find the good performance in my herd. I owe this to myself. Costs are too high not to know which cows are working in my herd.
3. These Hereford feeder calf sales are a good source for my calves, but it may be more important for my customers. If I can get a load of calves together and get them

to one of these sales, it looks like the true value of these calves will be reached. Even better, my participation in this sale forces me to continue to make contact with my customers, and it also forces each of us to implement proper health and weaning practices.

4. Perhaps I could participate in a state or national Hereford sale to show the industry the type of cattle I am propagating. Maybe I could sort off the lower one-third of the calf crop and retain ownership and feed those calves. That could give me some insight into how profitable my cattle can be in the feeding industry. Wouldn't it be good to see my cattle go through the Certified Hereford Beef program?
5. I need to continue to look at improving my genetics without bias or prejudice. Whether it be my herd bull or an AI sire, I should study the genetics along with the conformation in order to make the correct changes within my herd.

These lists are a bit short and maybe even a little funny, but I put them together to stimulate some thought. Hereford breeders are seeing positive movements around the world. We live in

a country where we are free to express ourselves in just about any way we like. I would suggest that if we all stay positive and market our individual programs based on their benefits and not worry about what our fellow breeders are doing, then we would all move in the right direction. Make your decisions without bias or prejudice, and you will be able to reap some real benefits.

The new genetic analysis is finished and published. The power of this data is now in your hands. You can search new expected progeny differences (EPDs) online at Hereford.org or request a printed version of the sire summary by contacting the Association office.

Set your goals and become resolute and steadfast in the direction you go to obtain those goals. Remember, the beef industry moves a little slower because of the slower turnover. So, it becomes even more important to make good decisions today, because these decisions will affect your herd for several years. **HW**