



PHOTO BY JOHN MEENTS

Pennsylvania Producers Add Value with Feeder Calf Pool

by Sara Gugelmeyer

More and more producers are pooling their efforts and their cattle to help increase profits. They are also using Hereford bulls to take advantage of the extra pounds heterosis provides. Pennsylvania cattlemen have been working to add value with the Pennsylvania Feeder Calf Pool since the program began in 1995, and they have reaped the rewards.

Penn State Extension Agent Dustin Heeter has compared

the profits earned by those participating in the pool with other Pennsylvania cattlemen and discovered that in the past five years, participants earned between \$100 and \$145 more per head, even after program expenses were paid.

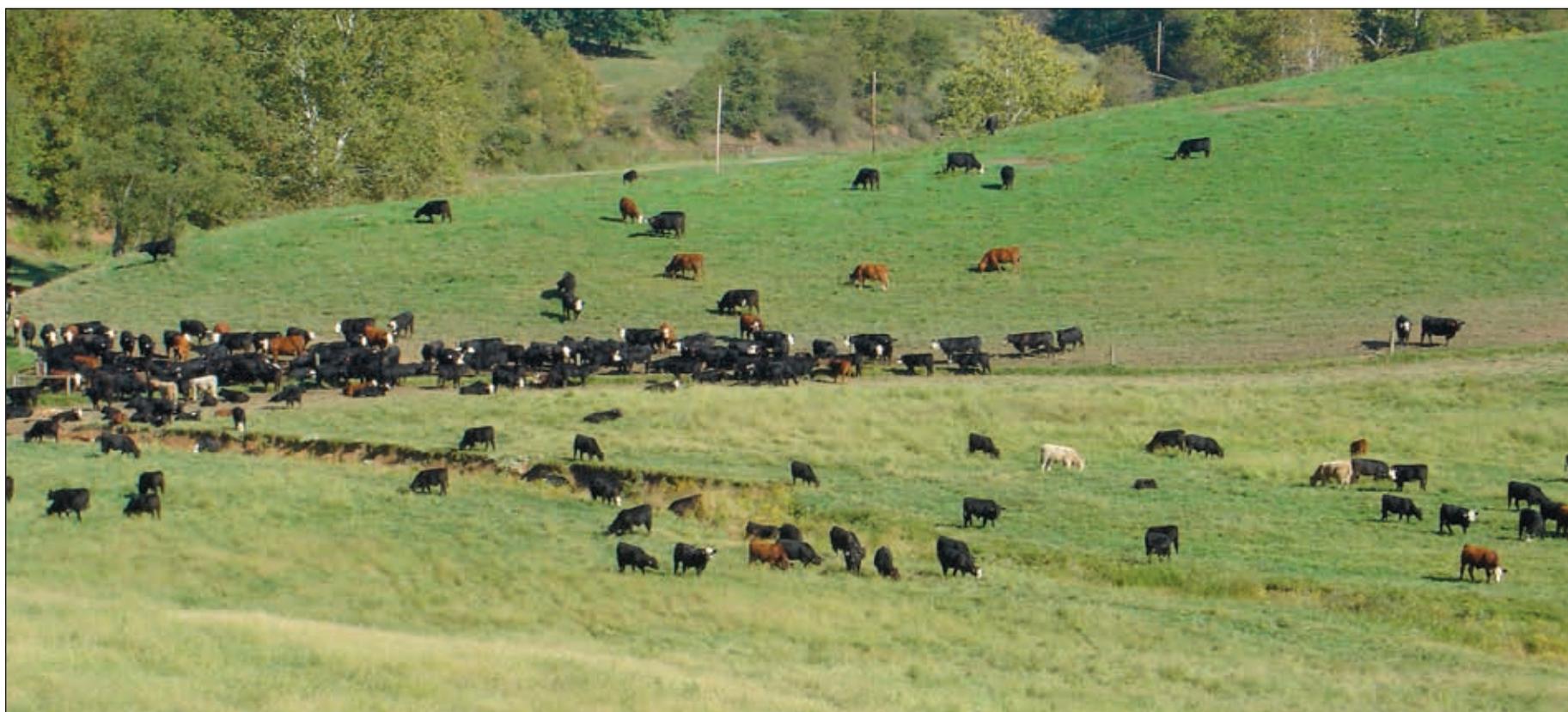
Hereford-sired calves brought more than purebred or other crossbred calves, also. "Data once again proves that crossbreeding and especially the use of Hereford bulls brings more dollars of

return," Heeter explains. At the 2008 sale, 472 calves sold with the Hereford-sired steers weighing an average of 29 lb. more than the others, increasing their value \$28.21 per head. The Hereford-cross heifers also weighed on average 35 lb. more, resulting in a \$43.05 advantage.

"Using the above numbers, if a producer had 18 calves marketed in the program with half being steers and half being heifers, they received an additional

\$641.34 of income by using a Hereford bull," Heeter says.

Skip Dick, Smithfield, Pa., is one of the founding members of the Pennsylvania calf pool program, and he has chosen to use Hereford bulls on his Angus-Gelbvieh cross cows. He says he has been pleased with the added pounds the Hereford influence has put on his calves. Because he only has about 50 to 60 cows, the calf pool allows him to combine with others to make a full semi



Pennsylvania feeder calf pool participants are adding value by breeding their primarily black cow herds to Hereford bulls.

2008 Pennsylvania Feeder Calf Pool data

	Straight bred	Crossbred	Hereford-sired
Steer	553 lb. — \$534.45	574 lb. — \$554.70	582 lb. — \$562.66
\$28.21 Hereford advantage			
Heifer	527 lb — \$471.76	518 lb. — \$463.68	562 lb. — \$514.81
\$43.05 Hereford advantage			



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— Dustin Heeter

load and take advantage of the increased price.

Cattlemen do have to meet requirements in order for their calves to be eligible for the program. Dustin Heeter explains that the process is 10 easy steps:

- 1) Producer must make a commitment to work with others for the good of all.
- 2) Producer nominates calves for the program in mid- to late-summer.
- 3) Calves are given rounds of a set vaccination program on the farm. First round is given when calves are on the cows; second round, at weaning, about 14 days later.
- 4) Calves are weaned on the farm for at least 40 days prior to shipment. These calves are fed a quality ration, making them bunk broke and gaining about 2 lb. per day.
- 5) All calves are handled under Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines and are all tagged with BQA tags and electronic ID.
- 6) All calves are graded on the farm.
- 7) Weights are taken on each calf or a tape estimate is made.
- 8) Information on all calves is compiled to form load lots. Once the information has been compiled and calves assigned to lots, then the cattle must sell and be delivered.
- 9) The calves sell the last Friday of September via a tele-auction from Buckhannon Stockyards. Calves never leave home

until shipment. Multiple shipping dates have been established to meet the needs of producers who calve later or have a longer calving season.

- 10) Calves are taken to shipping point on assigned day and weighed and sorted. This weight is the pay weight, including slides. Buckhannon Stockyards makes payment directly to the producer following shipment.

The program does also require some added expense, but Heeter says the added profit more than makes the difference. Pool expenses include the following:

- Sale commission \$10/head
- Pool processing \$8/head
- Insurance \$.44/head
- Checkoff \$1/head
- Vaccine \$5.35/head
- Dewormer \$2.80/head

These expenses result in a cost of \$27.59 per head. **HW**