



# Herefords Provide Endless Opportunities

Challenges for some can be opportunities for others. This would be the message that I suggest members of the American Hereford Association (AHA) send to the beef industry. During the past few years the AHA has successfully implemented and developed programs that can truly affect the value of cattle.

A few of the challenges facing the industry are production costs, land, water, traceability and image. Production costs such as feed, labor, machinery and taxes have seemed to peak and level a bit over the course of the past year, but those times made producers evaluate their programs.

Land and water continue to be issues as populations grow and demands are high. The good Lord will not make any more land, so beef producers will be asked to continue to produce more with less. Land will need to be shared by cattlemen, farmers, hunters and urban development.

As technology advances, traceability will continue to grow through all segments of the industry. People from around the world may be able to trace a product directly to a producer. And finally, the consumer will demand a positive image of the cattle industry.

These challenges facing the industry provide a tremendous

opportunity to cattlemen who are willing to include Hereford genetics in their programs. The Hereford breed has always been a major contributor to the beef industry, and the programs that the AHA has implemented over the past few years really position the breed to continue to grow that impact.

It all starts with the development of the Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program. In 2000 the AHA developed this program that tracks the performance of each animal in a herd. The implementation of Whole Herd TPR has allowed the breed to strengthen the genetic analysis and provide a set of numbers that is strong and useful.

The AHA currently gives producers expected progeny differences (EPDs) on 11 different traits and four Profit Indexes. The indexes were added in order for breeders to select genetics that affect various production systems through economically relevant traits (ERTs).

Over the past few years, the AHA has developed relationships with large commercial herds in various parts of the country to quantify the value of Hereford genetics in real world settings. For instance, the AHA supported a project conducted with University of California, Chico; Lacey Livestock; Harris Feeding Co.; and Harris Ranch

Beef Co. to look at the profitability of using Hereford and Angus bulls on predominantly Angus cows.

In other words, what is the value of heterosis? We are in the third year of this project, and with two years of tracking performance through harvest on the steers, there was more than a \$45 per head advantage to the Hereford-sired calves. But, more importantly, there was a 7% pregnancy rate advantage to the Hereford-sired females.

This has been a very interesting project that looks at the value of Hereford genetics in a real world commercial setting. You can find more detailed information about this project at [Hereford.org](http://Hereford.org) or contact the AHA office.

We are currently finishing additional projects with Circle A Ranch, Genglebach Farms and Amana Farms. These projects are basically tracking performance of steers in the feedlot with a goal of tracking some female performance. Included in these studies will be some individual progeny information on feed efficiency. The feedlot results of these tests should be available later this spring.

In addition to these projects, the AHA has two National Reference Sire Program (NRSP) test herds that allow us to test younger sires next to proven sires. Stahly Farms of South Dakota and Olsen Ranch, Nebraska, (awarded the Beef Improvement Federation

Commercial Producer of the Year award) have been instrumental in providing breeders an opportunity to develop strong accuracies on sires in a limited amount of time.

These herds make a living in the cattle business and have included Hereford genetics to help drive profits. We just completed a test with Olsen and saw a set of Hereford-sired calves that graded more than 77% Choice with great efficiency.

AHA members are committed to producing seedstock genetics that will work to add profit to the commercial industry. The programs and research projects have proven this time and time again. The industry has shown that adding heterosis to a calf crop and cow herd can make you much more profitable.

Data from U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) and Ft. Keogh have shown that incorporating Hereford genetics in a planned crossbreeding program can add profit. Heterosis has been referred to as the only "free lunch" available to cattlemen. Even though the industry is faced with several challenges, the opportunities are endless with the help of Hereford cattle. **HW**