

A+ Report Card for Beef Industry



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1 lb. of beef than it did
30 years ago.**

The buzz in the industry has been “efficiency.” And, why not? Efficiency is one of the cornerstones of American innovation.

Escalating grain and fuel prices have focused our industry with laser beam attention on what has always been the mission of beef producers, to become more efficient and profitable. Furthermore, much discussion has recently been bantered around the industry concerning those things that will improve our bottom lines such as heterosis and crossbreeding, feed efficiency and maternal cow efficiency, but for all practical purpose, it has always been the mission of the beef industry to become more efficient. Recent research funded by the National Beef Check-off has documented just how efficient the industry has become in the last 30 years, and the beef industry report card deserves an A+ grade.

Jude Capper with Washington State University recently reported that the U.S. beef industry produced 13% more beef with 30% fewer cows in 2007 when compared to 1997. The environmental effect of such efficiency gains is bordering on astonishing as Capper reported that it takes 19% less feed, 33% less land, 12% less water and 9% less fossil fuel energy to produce 1 lb. of beef than it did 30 years ago.

Those of you who have devoted your lives to the study of seedstock genetics and animal breeding know how hard you have worked to become more efficient. Your attention to detail as it relates to economically relevant traits, data collection and the use of statistical information is what keeps you in business.

Your insatiable appetite for pedigrees and performance is more than an occupation; it's a lifestyle. It takes special people who are competitive, entrepreneurial and passionate about the business to sustain this level of intense improvement.

Although the future game will be the same, the competition for resources is changing. In order for producers to remain in business in the coming global environment, efficiency will become even more important because of the intensely growing demands for inputs and a booming population that has grown from 5.2 billion in the mid-1990s to 7 billion in 2011, with a projection

to reach 10 billion people by 2050. The obvious upside to population growth and growing income levels in developing countries is a massive growing demand for food. American innovation is blanketed with opportunity when you think about the demand for high-quality protein that is coming.

Additional evidence of American innovation was reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA's) National Agriculture Statistics Service in 2011. The U.S. produced 20% of the world's beef with just 7% of the world's cattle. What does this say about American cattlemen, American agriculture, American innovation, American politics and American Hereford breeders?

- U.S. beef producers and American agriculture should never be questioned as they relate to environmental sustainability. U.S. producers are the world champions as they relate to efficiency and producing more with less. The U.S. beef industry should be handed a “world stewardship award,” if there was such a thing, for reducing its global footprint while increasing its production of nutrient rich beef.
- This type of efficiency can only be achieved in a free society, under free market systems, with limited government intervention. Anything else will diminish innovative creativity and American

producers' competitive will to perform. Our politicians must understand this. It's fundamental to U.S. competitiveness domestically and abroad.

- Trendy food preferences should not be legislated but should only be market driven. We, as a society, cannot be afraid of science or industry business systems. Issues such as global demand and global food stability should become more important when compared to debates such as born-local versus modern food systems, good food versus bad food or conventional versus natural/organic.
- The rate of change in breed improvement programs is sure to increase dramatically within the Hereford breed. Enhanced Hereford breed demand coupled with new investment in the Hereford breed will promote even more rapid improvement. The rapid adoption of embryo and AI (artificial insemination) technology that we have seen in recent years, the use of proven genetics and the enhancement of genetic information through DNA assisted breeding values are all technologies that will increase the rate of improvement and drive demand for the Hereford breed further. **HW**