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# HEREFORD WORLD

Published by the American Hereford Association

February 2012; Vol. 102, No. 9

## Start with Hereford Mamas



PHOTOS BY JOE RICKABAUGH

Good Hereford cows are the foundation of the Kaczmarek's program.

### *The Kaczmarek family's recipe for producing market-topping calves starts with good Hereford cows.*

by Sara Gugelmeyer

**B**ill and Roberta Kaczmarek got into the Hereford business in 1971, but it was just 11 years ago when they started breeding part of their registered Hereford cows to top-quality Angus bulls. It didn't take long for them to build a reputation in southern Missouri for the fancy F1 calves produced, especially when combined with Kaczmarek's excellent management and customer service.

"They're good, honest people and they sell good, honest cattle," says John Wheeler, Marionville, Mo., who has bought Kaczmarek's black baldie heifers for several years.

#### **Start with good genetics**

To get good cattle, you start with good cattle, says Joe Kaczmarek, Bill and Roberta's son, who has joined

the business with his parents and brother, Tony. For Kaczmarek, getting good cattle means using the Hereford cow herd the family has been building for decades.

They run about 275 registered Hereford cows on their 1,500-acre farm near Salem, Mo. About 125 head are used in a purebred Hereford seedstock program, and 175 are bred to Angus bulls to produce the aforementioned black baldies. They also have about 30 F1 cows they use for recipients, 20-25 replacement heifers for the purebred herd and 20-25 replacement heifers for the F1-producing herd.

Although some prefer to cross Angus cows on Hereford bulls, Kaczmarek appreciates their Hereford cows. "Herefords are easy

breeders, very maternal," says Joe. "We like their longevity. We have cows in the herd that are 13, 14 years old. We have a 70-day calving cycle, and they breed back and perform the same way every year."

Since Kaczmarek are a cattle-only operation, they added some fall-calving cows to help with cash flow. They have about 25-30 fall-calving cows that are bred to Angus bulls and 50 fall calvers bred to Herefords.

#### **Add good management**

No matter the calving season, calves are weaned between 7 and 8 months old. However, the preconditioning starts before weaning. First off, all Kaczmarek's cows are PI-tested to ensure the calves have the best chance possible to be healthy.

Then, Kaczmarek are firm believers in Nutrena feed. They begin supplementing the calves about 30 days before weaning with

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— Joe Kaczmarek

a Nutrena preconditioner. The calves continue eating the supplement out of a self-feeder after they're weaned.

Roberta says, “We keep them on average about 45 days after weaning.” By the time the calves are sold, they've been vaccinated twice, castrated and bunk broke.

They prefer to band their bulls, and they also work with their veterinarian on a vaccination program using Novartis brand vaccines. Also, Kaczmareks enroll their cattle in the Missouri Quality Systems Assessment (QSA) program.

At sale time the heterosis pays off in terms of quality and pounds. Joe says, “We like the hybrid vigor because of rapid growth. When we wean, our heifers average 635 lb.; steers average 675. That's at about 10 months of age.”

Again, part of that growth can be attributed to Kaczmareks' level of care. They've added different grass species to their pastures to help ensure high nutrition year-round.

Joe says, “We consider ourselves manufacturers of grass and hay. We have specific fields with specific grasses to use at certain times of the year. We use a different combination of legumes, fescue; we use endophyte-free fescue, orchard grass, red river crab grass, red clover, rye and others. It's all mixed in there, so it

comes up at a time when we can use it.”

American Hereford Association Director of Seedstock Marketing Joe Rickabaugh says, “It is an extreme pleasure to visit the Kaczmareks' place. They have developed their ranch with superior pasture and grass management.”

Kaczmareks have stacked carefully planned management on top of their good genetics. This combination seems to be a winner at the sale barn.

The calves are marketed through a regional auction market: South Central Regional Stockyards at Vienna, Mo. Dave Patton manages the barn and really appreciates the Kaczmareks' hard work. “There's no doubt that they are one of the top outfits in our trade area,” Patton says.

Another advantage of the Hereford-Angus cross is disposition. Roberta says, “That's something Dave comments on when he comes to view our cattle before we take them up to the sale. He gets out and walks among them.”

The Herefords' kind disposition certainly shines in Kaczmareks' F1 calves, but Kaczmareks also do what they can to keep the cattle quiet. Roberta says, “What we do is, from the time we wean, we separate them. We never have the steers and heifers mixed together;

they are always separate. We are among all of them equal number of times, but it keeps them a little more calm.”

It's a combination of all of these attributes that helps Kaczmareks' cattle top the market at the Vienna market. Roberta says, “We've developed a good relationship with Dave, and we've developed a reputation. People call to find out when we are going to sell them.”

#### **Proof is in the sale**

John Wheeler is one of those buyers who would like to get Kaczmareks' calves bought. He develops heifers for the Missouri Show-Me Select Replacement Heifer Program Sales. (See more on the Show-Me Select heifer program on Page 18 of the October 2011 *Hereford World*.) He typically buys the spring-born calves in November, breeds them in April and sells in November. Fall calves are bought in April, bred in the winter and sold in May.

Wheeler has purchased Kaczmareks' heifer calves for several years but admits, “They're pricey; sometimes it's kind of hard to give what they bring.”

He believes they are worth it, though, because, he says, “They've got real good genetics and some good-sized bunches. You can get 30 or 40 heifers that all match. They've got a good vaccination program, and are honest. I've never got any from them that were bred. They are just good-doing heifers.”

Likewise, Wheeler has been able to build a reputation developing and selling nice baldie heifers. “I've been at it several years and tried to treat people right. It seems like there's always a buyer for them. The baldies bring

more money for me and in our region. Everybody knows I will have a set of black baldies (at the Show-Me Select Sale). That's what I try to focus on, but it's hard to find the ones I want.”

Wheeler explains the reasons he's willing to raise his hand on Kaczmareks' cattle is because they've put some work into it. “They take it very seriously. They do an excellent job on getting information to me. A high percentage of (the heifers) make the grade. You can buy heifers other places that look good, but when it's all said and done, you end up with a lot of rejects.

“They let me sort them. They give me that privilege. I have to buy them through the stockyards, but they let me go through them, and if there's a bad tail or bad ear or something, they'll let me cut that one out. That makes a lot of difference. I am not going to buy heifers that won't work for me,” Wheeler says.

The steer calves are also highly sought after and usually go to feedyards in Kansas or Nebraska. Patton says buyers appreciate them for many reasons. “It goes back to crossbreeding for true F1s. I think a Hereford cow in the state of Missouri is as good, or better, than any other English bred cow; she will go out there and use the grass and bring a calf with her every year. The black baldies have always been at the top of the ranks in my market.”

Adding to that, Patton says, is that “Kaczmareks are using top quality of two breeds and they're backgrounding and getting the calves ready for market in the best condition. All that combined, they've developed such a tremendous reputation. It's a pleasure getting to handle those kind of cattle.”

#### **Complete with care**

More than anything, though, the Kaczmarek family cares. Patton says, “They care about those cattle. They want their cattle to work for whatever operation can use their cattle. If we could get everyone to care as much about their reputation as Kaczmareks, our industry would be tremendous and my job would be a lot easier.”

Kaczmareks are continuing to add to their Hereford seedstock herd and F1-producing herd. Rickabaugh says, “They have added some of the leading Hereford genetics and insist on superior EPDs (expected progeny differences). When you go look at their commercial operation, you are blown away by the consistency and quality of their black baldies. They top the market each year in their area and not by just a little. People are lined up to buy their F1 baldie females. This is a program on the move to great things.” **HW**



Kaczmareks' black baldie calves combine the best of both breeds and bring top dollar.