

'The Dash'

My wife, Mary Ann, and I recently attended a celebration of life for one of our dear friends. During the service, the pastor made reference to a poem called "The Dash." It references the dash between the date of your birth and passing. For instance, for me, it is September 1963-?, and I am happy the ending is still in question.

One stanza of the poem reads:

*"He noted that first came
the date of birth
and spoke the following
date with tears,
but he said what
mattered most of all
was the dash between those years."*

The poem explains the dash in the middle is the most important part because this refers to your journey on Earth.

As I have thought about this poem, I feel as if it can be broken down even further, even referencing different

segments of our lives and careers. As cattlemen and seedstock producers, the dash can make reference to the influence you have had on your ranch and customers and, more importantly, the consumer of your product.

Evaluate your herd and decisions

As we move into spring calving and breeding season, I challenge all of you to look at your dash and to evaluate your herd. Find out how your breeding decisions have influenced your profitability and the profitability of your customers.

The Hereford breed is so unique compared to other breeds because of Herefords' ability to adapt to various environments. That said, identifying what role Hereford genetics play in your customers' programs is important, and making breeding decisions based on that information will play a huge role in your success.



by Jack Ward, executive vice president

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Utilize tools

Your customers also depend on you to make those decisions using all of the current tools available. The American Hereford Association (AHA) has developed tools and resources over the years for breeders to use to make informed and well-documented breeding choices.

Those tools include the Pan-American Cattle Evaluation (PACE) backed by Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™), fully documented and transparent pedigree information supported by DNA testing for parent verification, abnormality testing and genomic-enhanced expected progeny differences (GE-EPDs).

In addition, the AHA has developed a one-of-a-kind young sire test program, the National Reference Sire Program (NRSP), which has allowed us to prove young sires quicker for all traits of economic importance. We continue

to grow this program, and all of these data are used in our current genetic evaluation, which is updated 10 times a year.

As we continue to work toward sustainable beef production, we must start with profitability. You and your customers must remain profitable, as our industry is asked to produce more with less.

Genetics, along with good animal husbandry practices, good health programs and transparency with our consumers will all be key ingredients to success.

As the spring progresses, let's challenge ourselves to leave a special dash. Fill the dash with knowledge and make the decisions that positively affect you and the industry. Ask yourself, "Would you be proud of the things they say about YOUR dash?" **HW**