



It's That Time of Year

I am sure many of you are well into your spring calving season and you are thinking about how soon you can get cows moved to grass for the summer. On a positive note, most areas of the U.S. are seeing some relief to the drought conditions they have been faced with the past few years.

Some preparation needs to be made to make sure pastures are ready for summer grazing, and now is the time to get those things done. Reseeding or overseeding can be done in a lot of areas of the U.S. during this time of the year; it can be done in a lot of cases when pastures are being fertilized.

Taking soil samples is also a good idea so you can add the appropriate nutrients and not spend your dollars foolishly. Soil samples also give you a good reading on what type of minerals should be utilized during the grazing months. County Extension agents, state beef specialists and local veterinarians are good sources to help you with these issues. There are a lot of local and regional meetings conducted to help producers make important decisions about pasture care.

Fencing is also an issue to consider. The snow, wind or just plain time can wear fences down. There is nothing tougher on neighbor relationships than poor fences that allow bulls easy access back and forth. Check on local laws and regulations to see who is responsible for line fences. Most of these cases are easily worked out with neighbors agreeing to work together for the benefit of all.

Another area to investigate is the possibility of utilizing intensive or rotational grazing systems. The American Hereford Association (AHA) has developed a great

working relationship with Gallagher Animal Management Systems. Gallagher is a leader in fencing supplies and research. The company has a tremendous group of field representatives throughout the country; I would encourage you to contact an area representative to discuss your situation. These folks can also supply you with waterers, scales, electronic ID (EID) readers and modern data collection instruments.

Finally, this is the time of the year to think about sire selection. We first must remember that sire selection will affect your cow herd for many years to come. There are several questions to consider before making sire decisions, including:

- Who is my customer and what do they seek in Hereford genetics? What are their targets for marketing — selling calves at weaning, retaining ownership, producing herd bulls or even selling to some sort of specialty market?
- What areas do I need to specifically work on in my individual herd to supply those genetics? Do not worry about what your neighbor is doing or even what seems to be popular in other breeds. Just concentrate on your herd's needs.
- What tools do I have available to make positive changes? For example, do I need to use some proven artificial insemination (AI) sires? Do I need to take ultrasound measurements? Or maybe, I should look at mature size or udder quality in my cow herd.
- Finally, we need to ask ourselves, "Why did the good Lord put Hereford cattle on the face of

this earth?" Striving to produce the most ideal animal for your customer is vitally important, but we must keep the fundamentals in mind. Hereford genetics will be utilized throughout the world because they can survive in many different environments. They are strong, durable cattle that can utilize forages. Do not try to make something for everyone.

Remember: commercial cattlemen are looking at complimentary breed decisions more today than ever before. Heterosis is a key asset in commercial cattle production that is being reinstated throughout the country.

The AHA can help

The AHA provides several tools to help you make the proper decisions when selecting sires. Obviously the AHA database is one of the largest in the world. It arms breeders with an opportunity to make good solid decisions.

Breeders can make sire selections by visiting Hereford.org and utilizing the EPD Search & Reference tool or the online *Sire Summary* under the Whole Herd TPR menu. If you prefer you can request a printed *Sire Summary* by calling the AHA at (816) 842-3757.

When making selections, you can utilize the expected progeny difference (EPD) traits that are measured or you might take a look at the \$Profit Indexes that the AHA developed a couple of years ago.

The indexes allow you to specifically focus on an area that your customers are requesting and to select bulls without putting thresholds on EPDs.

The tools available are endless and whole herd reporting has strengthened the database, which helps take the

guesswork out of sire selection. Obviously AI opens the doors to allow the use of genetics from around the world. Please remember bulls can be entered in the Non-Certificate AI Sire program this year. Also look for the *Hereford AI Book* that will be included in the March *Hereford World*.

A few reminders

As you prepare for springtime, consider incorporating these suggestions into your management plan.

- Ultrasound yearling cattle and take scrotal measurements on bulls (301-530 days).
- Take udder quality scores on cows at calving.
- Get cow herd inventories updated and returned to the Association.
- Continue to participate in online Hereford 101s. The next 101 will be Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. CST. A Gallagher Animal Management Systems representative will join me to discuss grazing strategies. The presentation will also feature information about Gallagher products including fence, scales and scaleheads for data collection. Use LiveAuctions.tv to register for and participate in the Webinar, including asking questions of the speakers.

Without a doubt the strength of the Hereford breed lies in the hard work of its breeders. Continue to collect and submit data, and make selections based on the needs of your herd and clients. **HW**