

Hereford Enthusiasm Spreads



Jack Ward

What a winter! From one end of the country to the other, this winter will be one to remember. As I write this column, it is again blistering cold in Kansas City, and the east side of the U.S. is getting blasted again with snow.

My family and I have been fighting the elements just like you to get the cows fed and the waterers thawed. It is always amazing to me how cattle can adapt and survive and even perform in so many different seasons. The cows seem to take this weather better than I do.

Even with all of the tough temperatures and moisture this winter, for about 10 days in the middle of January, the weather broke and folks made it to Denver for another exciting Hereford event. What an event it was. The cattle were as strong as ever and the enthusiasm of breeders, exhibitors, press, bull studs, foreign guests and those from outside the breed was just something to see and experience.

The weather cooperated and so the Yards were full, the sales were amazing and the presentation of the cattle exceptional. It should have given you a great feeling wherever you were to be a Hereford breeder.

Without question, this was the best set of cattle in the Yards since I started at the American Hereford Association (AHA), and the show on the Hill was again the talk of the industry from outside our breed.

I personally want to thank and congratulate all of the breeders who brought cattle for the show and sale.

It is expensive to do, and with the weather conditions leading up to the show, it was even tougher this year.

In addition, I want to personally thank and congratulate the AHA staff. These folks work so hard to make sure that things go smoothly and that breeders are given the best opportunity to display and market their cattle. It starts with the hospitality suite, proper stalling, show programs, marketing opportunities like a national sale and even an online video auction, and then there is follow-up with show results posted online and press releases sent out to the media.

The National Western is always a showcase for the Hereford breed and a great place for everyone to get together and talk about opportunities within the breed.

A special thanks to all who supported the hospitality suite. Each time I went to the suite during the week, I would find breeders sitting around discussing opportunities or just catching up with each other.

Right after Denver, several staff members traveled to San Antonio for the Cattle Industry Convention and Trade Show. It was good to be able to be a part of this event, and the AHA again had a booth in the trade show.

The activity around the booth was excellent with lots of interest in the research project that the AHA has done documenting the value of Hereford genetics in crossbreeding programs. There were lots of questions

by folks from throughout the U.S. on how to best incorporate Herefords back into their cow herds.

The general theme of the speakers was that heterosis needed to be utilized throughout the industry. Perhaps the most important issue at the convention was the threat that the beef industry is beginning to feel from different activist groups and legislators that would like to change or eliminate the industry as we know it.

I would suggest that this threat is real and eminent if we do not put aside some biases and prejudices. I would suggest that it is no longer an issue that cattlemen can fight alone. We need and should seek support from all parts of agriculture. Just as our country has run other industry out of the U.S. to other countries, it can do the same with agriculture.

Today the disposable income that U.S. citizens spend on food and nourishment pales beside the amount spent on luxury items. I wonder if the same will be said if we begin to rely on other countries for our food, not to mention the safety and abundant supply that we take for granted.

Don't forget now is the time of the year to collect ultrasound data, calf weights and udder scores on calving cows. When breeders continue to collect and submit data at all levels of production, AHA will be able to provide the tools and information that you will need for your customers to make informed and safe decisions. **HW**