

Hereford Breeders Believe in Family

by **Jennifer Carrico**, *High Plains Journal*

Family roots run deep at GKB Cattle, Waxahachie, Texas. Everyone is treated like family when they drive down the lane. Cow families are also important.

Gary and Kathy Buchholz both have a cattle background and feel that it is important to honor the cow families that have built their herd through the years.

“We truly believe in cow families here and probably have more 10- to 12-year-old cows in our embryo program than we do younger cows,” Gary says. “If they can do their

job at that age, they are worth having around.”

When the Buchholzes select replacements in the Hereford herd, longevity is very important. Heifers are selected on individual phenotype, but genotype plays a big part in making sure they are the “keeping kind” also.

The Buchholzes run about 180 cows on their ranch just south of Dallas. That consists of 115 registered Herefords, 60 recipient cows carrying embryos from their

continued on page 74...





GKB has both a spring and fall calving program, but the bulk calve in the fall starting in October.

elite cows and a handful of Shorthorn cows they have left after selling most of the rest of that breed.

History

Gary's beginning in the cattle business was when he was in high school. While he wanted to buy a show heifer, his dad thought it would be a better idea for him to get a bank loan to purchase 25 Angus cows.

"While it wasn't what I wanted to do at the time, I now realize it was the right thing because I learned so much about raising cattle from that experience," he says.

Gary's family moved to Texas from Illinois when he was 2 years old, as business brought them to the area. His father managed a grain elevator at the time. His family continues to have a grain elevator and feed business, along with some farm ground.



Together Gary and Kathy judged the 2010 National Hereford Show in Denver.

Gary attended college, studying agriculture education, and taught in the Duncanville school district for 11 years. He helped grow the agriculture education department and FFA program.

Kathy grew up in west Texas, where her father still runs a Hereford ranch near Midland. She is a fourth generation Hereford breeder, growing up in 4-H and FFA programs, and holds a master's degree in land economics.

Kathy's mother was also involved in the Hereford operation and is known as the first national intercollegiate rodeo all-around cowgirl champion in 1951. While Kathy was growing up, her mother was very involved with Hereford activities as well.

The two met while attending the Fort Worth Stock Show in the late 1970s and later married in 1987. They have served as advisors to several different youth groups and are always willing to help juniors with their projects and activities. Gary and Kathy currently serve as National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) advisors.

"We truly believe in the junior program. It teaches kids so much about values, work ethic and decision making, which is so important," says Kathy.

Not only did Gary and Kathy both grow up in the junior programs, but they have watched their families go through the process as well. Their nieces and nephew have shown for several years and continue the family's success.

Land management

Pasture management is important at GKB, as summers can often be dry. Therefore, they keep a watchful eye on

their grass and what needs to be done to improve the pastures.

Their winter pasture improvement includes the planting of endophyte-free fescue grass.

"It's a very hearty grass and withstands a lot of abuse, while still providing good nutrition for our cows," says Gary.

Other grasses have been interseeded, as well, to extend longevity of the grasses in their pastures.

These improvements have helped them go from the need of four acres per cow to the need of only one acre per cow.

Hay ground provides all the hay GKB cattle uses each year for feeding cattle through the winter months. Most of the hay baled on their ground is fed each year. High cane grasses are planted in some hay fields. These grasses are high yielding — up to 10 bales per acre — and are very highly palatable.

Besides being fed high-quality hay, cows are fed a 20% protein cube throughout the year. Kathy says by feeding cows once or twice per week, it makes them easier to move between pastures and easier to round up when working them. Cattle are provided with a 27% protein tub and high-quality minerals all year.

Cow herd

The Buchholzes select females that are the total package, focusing on longevity. A good foundation helps cows last in their herd.

First-calf Hereford heifers are bred to Jersey bulls for calving ease. Female progeny from this group are then used for recipient cows after they have had their first calf.

Calving times are in both the spring and the fall with the bulk of calving in the fall, starting in October.

"If we have plenty of shade and cool nights, it is okay to calve in July and August, but we prefer to wait until we know the conditions are better for the cows," says Gary.

Gary is in charge of heat detection, and Kathy is in charge of artificial insemination (AI). She studies each cow based on when the cow is in standing heat, and she also uses temperature measurements in order to increase conception rates.

"If a cow's body temperature is too high, the semen will be damaged or killed before it can even reach the egg," she explains. "Therefore, we make sure they have a proper body temperature before AIing. Sometimes that means letting a cow cool down for a while."

Cows are inseminated for one to two passes and then get turned out with bulls. With the merging of the polled Hereford and horned Hereford associations and registries, they have continued to have both polled and horned cattle in their herd to get the best genetics.

When they first moved to their current location in 1998, they decided to concentrate on their Hereford program. Previously they had also operated Buchholz Bros. Shorthorns until 1992. Their Hereford herd started prior to the move to the Bardwell area, when they ranched with Kathy's parents.

Cows are put into the embryo program after they have had one calf. Generally, cows will be flushed one time and then bred back to maximize the production of the cow.

"We look at longevity when we are breeding cows. We don't flush heifers because we want to know what kind of cow they will be before we multiply their production," says Gary.

Calves are vaccinated, branded and tattooed at approximately one month of age and are then weaned at approximately six months of age, depending on what time of year it is and strictly depending on Mother Nature.

Calves are merchandised in many different ways; bulls and replacement heifers are sold at the ranch.

Bull buyers include many cattlemen using Hereford bulls on Brahman females because of the Herefords' docility.

"We stress quality all around here, not quantity," says Kathy. "Our customers are very important to us."

Showing

About 60-70% of the heifers sold go to a junior exhibitor. These show heifer prospects are sold at various consignment sales and, last year, GKB hosted its first Internet heifer sale in April.

"It takes a lot of effort to do well in the showing, but if a junior is willing to make the commitment, they can become successful," says Gary. "If a junior raises their cattle our way, then we will help them with management, including ensuring they calve unassisted the first time."

The Buchholzes hope their guidance will help juniors be in the black within three years of purchasing their project. They allow customers to bring back progeny to be sold in their sales. Those animals carry the GKB prefix along with the kid's prefix.

Exhibiting cattle at fairs and shows across the nation has been an excellent marketing tool for GKB. However, they realize that cattle must be able to perform outside the showing.

"A heifer can be a show heifer but, ultimately, they have to be a cow," says



GKB cattle compete successfully on the national, state and regional levels.

Gary. "You can collect all the blue ribbons possible, but if an animal can't produce, they aren't worth having around."

GKB-bred cattle have won at national, regional, state and county levels. The success has helped GKB continue to market high quality cattle to juniors across the country.

Herd bulls, including the most recent herd bull, GKB Downtown, have been shown as well, but then are turned out on cows to prove themselves.

"Every cattleman wants a good dog, a good wife and a good bull. I have been fortunate to have all of those and more," says Gary. **HW**

Editor's Note: This article was first printed in the High Plains Journal.



The Buchholzes select females that are the total package, focusing on longevity.