

For six years, Hereford and Hereford-influenced cattle have brought greater prices through the Hereford-influenced sale in Carthage, Ill.

Brent Lowderman and his wife, Kris, have increased demand for Hereford cattle through the development of a yearly Hereford-influenced sale in Illinois.



Ensuring the Respect They Deserve



2013 Hereford Innovator winners Brent and Kris Lowderman have worked to ensure Herefords bring competitive prices at the sale barn.

by **Christy Couch Lee**

He was a Hereford breeder discouraged by the discounts Hereford-influenced calves received. Fortunately, he also owns a sale barn. And he set out to even the playing field for the whitefaced breed.

For this reason, Brent Lowderman and his wife, Kris, were honored with a Hereford Industry Innovator Award by the American Hereford Association

(AHA). The award was presented on Jan. 18 at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Brent and Kris helped start the Greater Midwest Hereford Influenced Feeder Calf Sale in 2007, which helped create demand for Hereford and Hereford-cross feeder calves. The sale helps smaller producers pool their cattle and draws buyers looking specifically for Hereford feeder calves.

Brent and Kris own and operate the Carthage Livestock Auction Co. in Carthage, Ill. Brent manages the auction barn, and Kris utilizes her skills as an accountant to keep the books for the auctions.

Their strong family history in both the Hereford industry and auction business have helped in the building of their sale barn success.

In the blood

Brent was raised on his family's Hereford operation, Lowderman Cattle Co. He is still a part of that operation today along with his parents, Jack and Sherry, who started the Hereford business; his brothers, Monte and Cody; and their families.

The cattle operation has both increased and decreased through the years and today consists of 150 cows — 50-75 of which serve as embryo transfer donors.

As the Lowdermans increased their cattle operation, they also became devoted to growing their auction business. Each year, the Lowdermans conduct 75-100 sales with an emphasis on farmland and residential real estate through Lowderman Auction Co. In addition, they sell monthly real estate auctions for Williams & Williams across the country.

"Our brother, Cory, passed away in 2000," Brent says. "At that time, Monte and I made the decision that he would take the family auction company, and I would take charge of the cattle. I'd like to think we took both to a new level. And when our youngest brother, Cody, returned to the family operation, he has taken the cattle operation to yet another level."

In 2003 the opportunity arose for Brent and Kris to purchase the Carthage Livestock Auction Co.,



Brent (left) and Kris (right) Lowderman work to bring competitive prices for Hereford-influenced calves at their special yearly sale.

where he had worked while also working for the family operation for two years.

"I grew up around sale barns with dad selling five days a week," Brent says. "While kids were watching cartoons on a Saturday morning, I was sitting at the local sale barn. I love the cattle sales."

At the sale barn

Brent manages about 25 sales a year at the Carthage Livestock Auction, marketing 20,000-25,000 head annually.

And six years ago, he realized a need to be filled for the Hereford breed.

"I would talk with Hereford breeders who were \$150 behind the money at the sale barns," he says. "Then John Meents approached me, asking if I would be willing to put together a sale. I said, 'Absolutely.'"

John Meents, AHA field representative, says the discounts often associated with Hereford feeder cattle highlighted the need for a sale such as this.

"Before the sale in Illinois, and the one like it in Kentucky, Hereford calves were bringing 10-15 cents less than black-hided cattle," John says. "I believe in non-discounts — not premiums. And we were being discounted, which was bad for our cattle."

Now, the first Thursday of each January is reserved for the Hereford-influenced sale, through which 400-600 calves are marketed yearly.

All calves consigned to the auction must be pre-registered for AHA's Hereford Verified program. As calves are brought to the sale barn, they are weighed and grouped into 75-lb. increments.

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Hereford cattle come from as far as Pennsylvania to be sold in the Carthage Hereford-influenced sale.

“In a class of 600-675-lb. calves, a steer weighing 600 or 675 will be paid \$1.40 per pound if that’s the bid, across the board,” Brent explains.

And because of this, he says, consignors are pleased.

It’s a good thing

Brent says nearly 95% of breeders participating in the sales are purebred Hereford breeders, consigning approximately 90% straight Hereford calves with the remaining as black baldies. Most consign from 15-20 calves each year.

One such consignor is Floyd Crane, who runs about 75 registered Hereford cows, along with 20-25 recipients to carry Hereford embryos, in LaSalle, Ill. He sells about 10-15 bulls each year, in addition to show heifers, through the Hereford Holiday Classic sale in Clinton, Ill.

Until three or four years ago, Floyd says, he sold his remaining

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— Floyd Crane

feeder calves at the local sale barn. And his cattle were bringing 10-15 cents less than their black-hided counterparts.

“We were discouraged by that,” he says. “When we heard how good the Hereford cattle were doing at the Hereford-influenced sale, we decided to try it. And we’ve been happy ever since.”

Now, Floyd says, his Hereford cattle are often selling higher than his neighbor’s black-hided calves.

“There’s no reason for us to think about going anywhere else,” he says.

Floyd says Brent’s Hereford background and passion also serves the consignors well.

“The wonderful thing about Brent is that he runs the sale barn and is a Hereford breeder, himself,” Floyd says. “He cares about his consignors and tries to help us as much as he can — even coordinating a semi to haul my cattle, along with my neighbors’, for this year’s sale. That’s a big thing for someone like me.”

John says the distance from which some consignors travel is testament to the value of the sale.

“The consignors have been happy,” he says. “And we even have two breeders bringing their cattle from Pennsylvania for the sale, which is about a 600-mile haul. They obviously see the value.”

John believes sales such as this drive the Hereford bull market, as well.

“One breeder had sold about four Hereford bulls a year before participating in the Kentucky Hereford-influenced sale several years ago,” he says. “His Hereford bull sales have doubled every year. And now, he’s selling 50-55 bulls a year.”

Brent says he believes the Illinois Hereford-influenced sale is a boost for the Hereford breed in Illinois, as well.

“It’s definitely helped us sell Hereford bulls,” he says. “And I believe it’s only going to continue to grow. I wish we could see where we are five years from now. I definitely think it’s only going up from here.” **HW**



Since the inception of the Hereford-influenced sale at the Carthage auction barn, Hereford cattle often bring more than their black-hided counterparts.