



Continuing the Conversation

During the Hereford Genetic Summit Sept. 4-5, 2014, Hereford breeders were challenged to embrace technology, focus on the customer, and concentrate on feed efficiency and end product merit to help position the breed to gain more commercial market share. We will “continue the conversation” in upcoming *Hereford World* issues as we discuss with breeders key take-home messages from the conference and as an Association we continue to build a roadmap for improving Herefords’ position in the cattle industry. For a complete summary of the event, visit HerefordGeneticSummit.com or see the October *Hereford World*.

This issue:

Feed Efficiency



Jerry Huth, Oakfield, Wis., and David Trowbridge, Tabor, Iowa, have both tested their bulls for feed efficiency using a system like this.

Game Changer

Hereford breeders are encouraged to document and build upon feed efficiency.

by Julie White

“The future for the Hereford breed is about as bright now as it has been in the last 53 years I’ve been involved in it,” said Dr. Kee Jim, veterinarian and founding partner of Feedlot Health Management Services Ltd. at the Hereford Genetic Summit last fall. How can seedstock producers ensure this is the case? A panel at the educational forum during the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting in November discussed a common theme — improving feed efficiency.

Efficiency matters

“We are doing a lot of things outstanding,” said Jerry Huth, a Hereford breeder from Oakfield, Wis., during the forum. “But there are a couple of areas that we have to add — one is feed efficiency.”

Huth encourages Hereford breeders to put emphasis on feed efficiency and to begin to improve the perception of the breed in this area. “If we can document that we are the feed efficiency experts we’re going to receive a great benefit in the market place,” he added.

Huth said he sends his entire bull crop to Hays Beef Development Center, Mt. Ayr, Iowa. “I saw a need to measure,” he said. “I can tell you one thing about six years ago when I started this, I thought I was pretty smart about feed efficiency. Right now I don’t know if I know feed efficiency at all. There are a lot of frustrations because there is great variability in it.”

An example Huth gave was that his bulls’ dry matter intake ranges from 15.4 lb. to 24.7 lb. per day. “The cost of gain is huge,” he said. “If you project yourself to 600 lb. of gain we have a variation between \$574.26 to \$363.91 on a very tight contemporary group of bulls that are fairly closely

related. This is a great variation in feed efficiency.”

He explains that many breeders are not interested in this data. “Why is that?” he asked. “I think No. 1 is people may not understand it. There is measurability but a problem in how to define it. That’s a problem we have with feed efficiency and it’s going to be a real driver for the industry.”

David Trowbridge, Tabor, Iowa, another panelist, shared Huth’s frustrations in feed efficiency variation. Trowbridge manages Gregory Feedlots, Inc. “I deal with feed efficiency every day,” he said. “That’s what drives my business.”

Trowbridge began feeding cattle 37 years ago when hogs saw a 4:1 feed conversion, chickens were 2:1 and cattle were 6.5:1. “Today, hogs and chickens have improved, but cattle are still the same,” he said. “The only thing we’ve changed is the technology of feeding cattle, which has improved our efficiency. However, we have not looked at the genetics to change that. It has to come down the road because we have to become more feed efficient.”

Keeping quality genetics

Huth and Trowbridge agree that breeders should be mindful of the genetics they choose to keep and market to cattlemen.

“The feeder calves are worth a lot of money so it’s not a big deal to take a bull calf and cut it,” Trowbridge said. “We’re still going to see more bulls hit the market that probably shouldn’t be there because of the price we can get for those bulls. But we’d like to not see that. We have a great opportunity and a great amount of technology in our industry to select the right genetics to do the right job and make a lot of progress in a short amount of time.” **HW**