

Shining Achievement



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Not since before the change in the tax laws of the mid-1980s, which pulled much of the tax-based incentives out of the cattle industry, have we seen such enthusiasm for the industry and the Hereford breed. This was evidenced by the large, active, upbeat crowd attending the National Hereford Show at the 100th National Western Stock Show in Denver. The selling of one-third interest in a yearling bull for \$105,000 was a highlight of the event and a true barometer of the excitement boiling in the business today.

The largest crowd the Hereford breed has seen in at least 20 years attended the memorable event, packing the stands for the pen and carload show and filling the seats of the stadium arena.

Nostalgia was involved in this well-attended and successful event, but rest assured, it wasn't just Hereford breeders who stood ringside to gander at the new genetics and improvements the breed has made in the last decade. There were breeders from several other breeds watching and admiring the accomplishments made in type, structure, shape, functionality, balance and performance.

We all have our favorite type and kind with specific performance parameters and just the right "bells and whistles" and rarely does anyone entirely agree with a judge. In fact Hereford breeders are as tough on themselves and each other's cattle as any breed. However, when all things are considered, the depth of quality in the product exhibited at the American Hereford Association's (AHA's) largest national product showcase has made leaps and bounds. At this rate of improvement, it will be exciting to see what the quality of Hereford cattle will be in the next five to seven years.

Board recommends open AI system

In order to maintain or even increase the rate of genetic improvement within the U.S. Hereford seedstock industry, population geneticists and animal

breeders tell us that we need to push the selection envelope by utilizing proven sires.

In addition we must identify those individuals that can move a herd rather than simply leave it in a permanent holding pattern. In order to do this the breed must utilize artificial insemination (AI) with proven trait leaders.

For several years the AHA Board has evaluated, debated and rehashed the issues associated with less than average AI use within the Hereford breed. Today approximately 15% of all registered Hereford calves are either AI or embryo transfer (ET) calves. Compare this to Angus at 50% and Gelbvieh at 25%. Breed trends change when true selection pressure is made with proven sires and when young sires are sampled and proven against those proven genetics.

The AHA Board identified the expense of AI use in both semen and certificate cost as a major deterrent to AI use as explained by countless breeders around the country. The solution, still in development, is a two-tier system that gives an AI sire owner an option to designate a bull as a: 1) traditional AI sire, which requires certificates to be purchased in order to register progeny; or 2) open AI sire, which allows the bull owner to sell semen without requiring a certificate to be purchased at the time the progeny are registered.

Both systems provide bull owners a choice to market their genetics however they deem appropriate for their individual circumstances. The AHA staff is formulating rules for the new "Open AI" policy and we hope to launch the program later this spring.

As breeding season quickly comes upon us, remember that a proven sire is sure to deliver a documented level of expectation, while a young unproven sire has a much smaller probability of breeding to expectation. The great ones that excel at a high level across multiple traits are hard to find and when we do

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The largest crowd in 20 years attended the Hereford activities Jan. 12-14 in Denver. For highlights of the National Western see the coverage starting on page 45.

find them we should definitely consider using them.

2007 nominating committee named

The nominating committee's responsibility is to identify six candidates to run for the three Board spots that are selected during the AHA Annual Membership Meeting in October. The committee members are:

Guy Colyer, Bruneau, Idaho, chairman
Dusty Rhodes, Henrietta, Texas
Bill Ashe, Selmer, Tenn.
Ray Ramsey, Greenfield, Ind.
Glenn Oleen, Falun, Kan. **HW**