



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:

Commercial

Commercially Focused

Genetic change through research continues to help Hereford’s resurgence in the industry.

by *Sara Gugelmeyer*

Hereford is the perfect Angus complement, according to Lorna Marshall, who is the Genex U.S. Beef Marketing Manager. When she spoke at the Hereford Genetic Summit last September, she highlighted what Hereford breeders have always known but recently proved and improved. Hereford’s strengths are maternal efficiency, docility, moderate milk and hardiness. And in the last ten years, Hereford breeders have really focused on raising cattle that are light birth weight but have rapid early growth and moderate mature size, said Marshall.

Research projects like those in conjunction with Harris Ranch, Circle A Ranch and Simplot Livestock Co. have helped prove Hereford’s value in the marketplace. (For more on those projects, log on to Hereford.org and choose “Value of Hereford Genetics” under the “Commercial” menu.) But, breeders’ commitment to Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) since 2000 has been vital to new traits recently released and still in development through the American Hereford Association (AHA).

“We understand that the most important economically relevant trait to commercial cattlemen’s profitability is fertility,” says Jack Ward, AHA director of breed improvement. “Whole Herd Reporting has allowed us to develop traits of sustained cow fertility and heifer calving rate to document fertility in the Hereford breed and the genetics responsible for making progress.”

The research for those two new traits, along with a new feed intake expected progeny difference (EPD), will be complete this spring. The AHA Board of Directors will hear the report at the April Board meeting,

and then those three new traits will be added to indexes this fall.

“This will make our indexes that much more powerful for our breeders to use to provide the right kind of information to their customers — commercial cattlemen,” Ward says.

Feed intake will be especially useful as part of the Certified Hereford Beef Index (CHB\$) but also important to the cow-calf operator, Ward points out.

“The feedyard is calling for it, and we need to help those throughout the industry select genetically for cattle which require less inputs,” Ward says.

Freshly available to breeders are the new udder EPDs, udder suspension (UDDR) and teat size (TEAT), which were released in December 2014.

“One of the big concerns of commercial cattlemen about Hereford cattle was udder quality,” Ward says. “Although that is considered more of a convenience trait, it is economically relevant. Commercial cattlemen do not have time to work through issues associated with udder and teat quality. Breeders have made huge progress and selected against udders and teats that require maintenance, but we now have a very useful pair of EPDs for them to continue to document this progress.”

Congratulations on the progress made, but keep working with your knife sharp and minds open, Marshall remarked at the conclusion of her presentation during the Hereford Genetic Summit. All these new genetic tools can help breeders do just that.

“That’s what Lorna was pointing out,” Ward says. “We’ve taken the issues head on and developed traits that can be very useful to our membership. Now we’ve got to use them.” **HW**

