

The Upper Hand

As bull season is winding down, commercial producers will be turning out their new purchases to advance their herds. In my opinion, there is no better sight than cow-calf pairs running on green grass with a herd bull looking to make his mark.



Shane Bedwell

Even though sales have been down compared to last year's record year, many producers have marketed more bulls than ever with their second-highest sale averages to date. This accomplishment is very impressive considering a down calf market and the uncertainty in the global economy. The success of these sales can be attributed to many reasons, but the fact is more and more cattlemen are regaining trust in Hereford genetics.

It's been no secret that black or red baldies are considered the best females in the industry. The simple benefit of heterosis has been well documented and proves

a definite advantage in terms of health, performance and fertility. Hereford genetics are able to contribute more than ever before. With traits such as udder suspension and teat size being added into the evaluation along with marked improvements in calving ease and birth weight expected progeny differences (EPDs), commercial breeders are finding comfort in these females.

With that said, producers cannot overlook the steer mates to these good replacement daughters. The fed cattle industry understands quality genetics and, in most cases, will pay for them. As margins get tighter, feeders will continue to rely on cattle that can perform and reach premiums for end product merit. Hereford breeders, through disciplined breeding decisions, have made marked improvement in marbling and ribeye area as well as growth in trait EPDs. As a result, the potential is there for these cattle to excel at all levels.

The key here, though, is telling the story, and many of you have been. But in order to keep the commercial cattlemen coming back year after year, there has to be a vested interest on your part as breeders. Beyond taking advantage of the tools available to improve genetics and upholding strict culling standards is the need to help the commercial guy take advantage of the genetics he is using from your seedstock herd whether that's giving a discount at next year's sale for the guys that retain ownership or if it's simply being at the local sale barn to insure your genetics are well represented.

The bottom-line is that you as breeders have to continue to build brand loyalty with your customer base. Many of you have ranch names, and these feeder cattle need to carry those names with them all the way through as if they were wearing the name like a brand on their hip. After all, you should feel proud of your genetics and the progress made. Why not pass it on to the next guy?

In closing, I would like to say that the Hereford breed has the upper hand right now — because in order to put that white face on the coveted baldie those commercial breeders have to come to you, the seedstock breeders. But, to keep the upper hand will require every breeder staying committed to keeping a balance of maternal focus and end-product merit, so every segment of the industry enjoys success. **HW**

