

# News from the Office



Craig Huffhines

An undeniable demand shift for the Hereford breed has thus far brought about good financial times for the American Hereford Association (AHA) in fiscal year 2012. Just through the midway point in the fiscal year, AHA has experienced a 6% increase in registrations, many of which are coming from older-aged females coming back into the performance program.

In addition to the excellent financial growth experienced within the AHA records department, other subsidiaries including Hereford Publications Inc. and Certified Hereford Beef LLC are experiencing excellent growth as well. *Hereford World* magazine business has been strong, reflecting a desire by breeders to advertise more and expose their programs to a growing buyer base.

In addition, CHB LLC has witnessed 15% growth in beef sales volume through the first two quarters of the year. CHB is expected to see a 6 million lb. increase in volume by fiscal year end, accounting for an additional 33,000 head going through the program in 2012.

These excellent times have provided the Association the resources to aggressively review several aspects of our business and develop strategies for improving member services, continuing and even expanding our research initiatives including the development of new genetic improvement tools and continuing efforts in breed validation in crossbreeding systems. Furthermore, CHB LLC has added sales and

marketing staff to support the growing CHB program.

## New Hereford team members

This spring AHA has made five new hires including a new customer service representative, Dawn Jochim, and Sydney Shephard, who will support online data exchange and on-farm software developments.

Jessica England, a new University of Missouri agriculture journalism graduate, was hired as HPI advertising coordinator. Within CHB LLC, two new graduates with Hereford roots have been hired to start in May, including past National Junior Hereford Association board member and Purdue University graduate Danielle Starr and past AHA youth department intern and University of Illinois graduate Jill Johnson. Both ladies will be trained to support the marketing, sales, customer service and communication efforts.

## Member services

Undoubtedly, the recording of registrations and performance data to document pedigrees and to produce breeder EPD reports is the most important service the AHA provides its membership. As important as it is, it is sometimes the most difficult and frustrating for membership to endure.

Record keeping and accurate transfer of data to the AHA are not always easy tasks. Couple those with issues that can hold up work such as delayed AI (artificial insemination) certificates, ID or data errors, missing parent information or payment challenges, to name a few, can

all trigger work being held.

This past year, the AHA implemented a very difficult computer system upgrade that is projected to have a shelf life of a decade or more. Learning the new system was a real challenge for staff. There were certainly some debugging and improvements to be made which caused some turnaround problems and grief for many members.

Many of those problems have been corrected, and we are happy to say we are back on track with expected turnaround. That being said, the AHA staff is committed to improving our service level even further. In April the AHA Board approved the investment of a process engineer contractor to come in and evaluate the AHA system of doing business.

In a team environment, staff worked with the contractor to develop new technology and management strategies for eliminating waste, improving turnaround time and reducing error rates in the data that breeders submit.

Over the course of the next six months, AHA staff will be working very diligently on a multifaceted reengineering project that will begin to make life easier for members. It will take a dynamic communication and education effort of both staff and membership, but we are hopeful that with your support, we will enhance service to membership that can reduce cost, add value, reduce variation caused by error and significantly reduce turnaround time even further. As a staff, we are all excited to take this challenge on in developing new tools that will make us stronger as a service provider. **HW**

## Check out online educational resources

Looking for information about how to manage your Hereford operations? There is a wealth of information at [Hereford.org](http://Hereford.org) to help Hereford breeders.

Recently added to the site is a suite of educational videos. Available online at [Hereford.org/videos](http://Hereford.org/videos), producers can watch how to register or transfer an animal, as well as learn about expected progeny differences and the Total Performance Records Program.

By clicking on the "Education Center" tab at [Hereford.org](http://Hereford.org) producers will find identification and management tips, FAQ sheets and marketing information. **HW**