

Balanced, Progressive



Shane Bedwell

As some of you may have heard, south-central Kansas and north-central Oklahoma experienced a historic grass fire last month. The fire burned more than 400,000 acres and was recorded as the 11th largest in U.S. history.

Personally, this news hit home with me as my family ranches right west of Medicine Lodge, Kan. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but some ranchers did lose cattle, building structures and miles and miles of fence. On a positive note, though, a lot of cedar trees were burnt, and with abundant moisture, the pastureland will come back better than ever.

After word had spread about the fire, many groups such as the Kansas Livestock Association started requesting that hay and fencing supplies be sent to people in need. I shouldn't have been but was overwhelmed by the selfless giving of cattlemen in Kansas and surrounding states. Semi load after semi load of hay was trucked to Medicine Lodge for donation.

It seems, though, that it almost takes hard times in life, like this, to bring everything back into perspective. It has been pretty clear to me that America's backbone is still alive and well. Rural America, farmers and ranchers, know how to pull together in times of crisis and are able to make it through.

My perspective

Since starting at the American Hereford Association (AHA), I have been impressed. The first four months have been very enjoyable, and I have met some tremendous cattle breeders and, better yet, just good people.

It has been quite amazing what you have done as breeders. There are more and more cattle that blend together exceptional phenotype and put together the expected progeny difference (EPD) profile needed for continued growth and acceptance of the breed within the industry. The Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program and the National Sire Reference Program (NSRP) have really added to the strength of our genetic evaluation system. This system has allowed you as breeders to really find the differences among sires and to make genetic progression quicker.

Continue to make good selection decisions

On Page 92 you will find a list of sires that have been awarded the Certified Hereford Beef Sire of Distinction (CHBS). This list proves that you, as breeders, have taken improvement in growth and end-product merit seriously. Rightfully so, commercial cattlemen are demanding more out of your bulls

because the packer and, ultimately, the consumer wants more as well. But understand, it must be done with balance. Selection of one trait at the expense of another trait is detrimental for the breed. The beauty of Dollar Certified Hereford Beef (\$CHB) and Dollar Baldie Maternal Index (\$BMI) is that both of these dollar indices are multi-trait weighted and take into account the economic weighting for each trait.

Choose carefully

So as you finalize your breeding decisions for next year's calf crop, keep a balanced but yet progressive approach in mind — regardless of whether you're raising show cattle, replacement females, seedstock bulls or bulls for the commercial man. It is important that every Hereford breeder pull together to raise the best product possible. Doing this will only strengthen the image of the breed and keep Hereford the breed of choice in America's cow herd.

Attend BIF

Also make plans to attend the 2016 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Meeting and Symposium June 14-17 in Manhattan, Kan. More information can be found at beefimprovement.org. **HW**