

Don't Miss the Signs

This *Hereford World* issue is always special because it gives you time to finish up some decisions on potential artificial insemination (AI) sires to incorporate into your herds and, perhaps more importantly, it gives you a chance to take a glimpse at the genetics that will be available for the fall sale and breeding season.

This will give you an opportunity to study some things that may be beneficial to your program. When making these decisions, you need to think about what is important to you and your customers. What "signs" are the industry and your customers sending that will affect the breeding and culling decisions you make in the next few months. Remember that the decisions you make today can affect your cow herd for several years.

Obviously the "signs" that your customers are giving you should affect the decisions you make, but industry "signs" should also affect your choices. It's important to remember as a seedstock producer to keep on the cutting edge of information

and technology, and yet be cautious not to forget what makes the Hereford breed unique. This can be a tough balance because sometimes what the industry needs and what your ranch needs are antagonistic, but remember: "It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark." It does pay to check out the "signs" that are out there as you make future breeding decisions.

Let's look at some industry signs that could affect our decisions in the future.

Animal traceability

Gary Johnson, director of worldwide supply chain management for McDonald's Corporation, says that animal traceability is the most important thing the industry can do to maintain consumer confidence. The American Hereford Association (AHA) and Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC have implemented the Hereford Verified program that guarantees traceability and rewards breeders with a premium for meeting certain standards. But, the most important part of the program may be that it allows breeders and the AHA to track genetics that can positively affect the breed.

Heterosis

Commercial cattlemen are looking at ways to take advantage of heterosis. Hereford breeders need to recognize what is important to commercial cattlemen and prove the benefits that Hereford cattle can provide. "Convenient" is the word that best describes the type of cattle most commercial cattlemen prefer. They want to use genetics that have some proof that they will be free of problems. In other words, they need to be born

unassisted, grow on limited resources and provide a profitable end product. Just as importantly, the females that are retained need to be fertile, long lasting and free of any inherited problems. The great news is that through Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) reporting, pilot projects, technology and science, the Hereford breed can show the advantages it has to offer the commercial industry. Additional programs such as the Gold TPR program and the Non-Certificate AI Sire program should encourage more data collection and also increase the use of AI.

Increased efficiency

Efficiency and cost of production will affect all parts of the business. The AHA is looking at ways to prove the value of Hereford genetics in programs looking to make progress in these areas. Feedlot information and cow longevity are on the front burner, and the AHA has programs in place to look at documenting their value. More importantly, the AHA is looking at ways to curb costs for the membership and become a more efficient supplier of information. Online registry has proven to be a valuable tool in this regard. Turn around time and cost of mailing are just a couple of examples of how the AHA is working toward becoming more efficient.

These are just a few "signs" that you can look at from the industry standpoint. I would encourage you to respond to the "signs" that your customers are giving you and make the genetic changes needed to continue to create demand for your product. **HW**



Jack Ward



Serving up Certified Hereford Beef® steak sandwiches during the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) tour stop at EE Ranches are American Hereford Association and Certified Hereford Beef LLC staff members Jack Ward and Jim Williams. During the BIF Annual Conference Ward was elected to the BIF board of directors. For highlights of the conference and tour see pages 138-141.