

Worth a 1,000 Words

Tips to help capture that great photo.

by *Angie Stump Denton*

Mastering



Close to perfect photo. Notice that the female is clean, her head is up, she is standing in a natural pose with her opposite-side rear leg forward and the background is not distracting. She looks long, clean-fronted, deep-bodied and good on her legs, and she has a nice udder — all the things you want to promote in a good picture.

As the saying goes, “A picture is worth a 1,000 words,” but it’s important to remember those words can be positive or negative. When using photos to help market cattle, be sure every photo portrays the animal in a good manner. First impressions are important, and it’s better to go without a photo than to use a bad photo.

“Many times a photo in an ad, on the Web or in a sale catalog is the first impression a person has about an animal,” says Joe Rickabaugh, American Hereford Association (AHA) director of field management and seedstock marketing. “This is a critical impression in the buyer’s mind and, thus, a very good to great picture is essential. A very good to

great picture will generate interest, phone calls and the buyer making the trip to your sale or operation.”

Don Birk, a professional livestock photographer since 1979, agrees with Rickabaugh. “A really good photograph creates an impression in the eye of the beholder that is very powerful,” he says. “A good photograph should show an animal at its best. I am a nut about structure and believe that a good photo starts with a good stance with their legs under them correctly. If they are not on their feet correctly, there is no point in continuing. You retry until they get it right. Then you work on getting their head right so that the animal comes together into the look that you desire.”

Whether you are getting ready for a production sale or online auction or you want to market some cattle private treaty, good photos can help get top dollar for your offering.

“There are so many great breeding programs out there and so many animals to choose from,” says Allan Brownary, Brownary Photographics, in the April 30 issue of *Fotofarming*. “What’s going to entice people to purchase from you? Showing off your product through the art of livestock photography should be at the very top of your list of priorities.

“Over the years I think people have become too attached to the profile shot. I’m not saying the profile shot is not important; it’s still the money shot, but what I am saying is that you have to think outside the box. Take some time and show the product off from all angles,” Brownary says.

Amy Cowan, AHA marketing and shows coordinator, says photography and marketing go hand-in-hand. “I think it is very safe to say that good or bad photos



A different angle. Don’t be afraid to try a different angle such as this. It’s not the typical profile shot, yet it’s a good portrayal of the bull. The bull looks long, clean-fronted and thick-quartered.

can make or break the sale of your Hereford cattle,” she says. “A lot of times we are of the mindset that if we are going to run an ad in the next *Hereford World* then we have to run a picture, even if we don’t have a picture that does the animal justice. At that point I would strongly suggest doing a creative design that doesn’t include a picture of the animal. The magazine has a creative group of artists on staff that would be happy to work up a fresh ad design and work around an average or less than average photo.”

Getting the good shot

When planning a photo shoot, producers first need to decide if they will take the photos themselves or hire it done by a professional livestock photographer.

“If you are good with a camera, then get the great shots and use them,” Rickabaugh says. “Be objective with your pictures and get some outside opinions if they are good enough. The other option is to use a professional photographer or ask for help from your AHA fieldman. Both professional photographers and AHA fieldmen know good pictures and can be a big help getting the right impression of your cattle.”

Birk says preparation is key to a successful photo shoot. “The cattle need to be in good condition, or they don’t photograph well. The clipping and preparation can be done in advance or at the time of photographing, dependent somewhat upon the crew available.”

He asks his clients to build a photo ring out of various kinds of cattle panels about 60 to 75 feet across. “This should be built or set up in a spot with a good background and have the grass mowed,” Birk explains. “This creates a setting that the cattle will look good in. Cluttered backgrounds distract from the photo.”

Katina Costerisan, a professional livestock photographer from Texas, says there are the technical things that make a good photo such as sharpness, nice contrast, balanced exposure and color correctness, but it’s more about how the photo portrays the animal. “Sometimes it’s not an easy task, and that’s why it’s difficult to be a professional livestock photographer.

You need to have an understanding of the animal’s features as well as the animal’s behavior to be able to anticipate its next move. Often you only have one chance to capture the money shot of a big herd sire. You don’t always get a second opportunity.”

If you decide to take your own photos, Birk offers these suggestions, “You need a good camera, someone to assist you (preferably not your mate, as you may test their patience and temperament), an eye for what you want the cattle to look like and the patience to stay on the task.”

Cowan gives these tips for a good cattle photo:

- 1.) Good lighting on the subject.
- 2.) Natural feet placement, I like to see all four of the feet in the photo with the inside front foot offset.
- 3.) Head up, ears forward and alert.
- 4.) Take photos in an area where the front feet are on a bit of an



Have patience when taking cattle photos. If you settle for an average or less-than-average picture you will always be reminded you didn’t take the time to get it right.

- incline to make the animal look level topped.
- 5.) Zoom in close.
- 6.) Have head turned slightly toward you so that you can see an eye.

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Photo day dos and don’ts

Katina Costerisan, a professional livestock photographer from Texas, and Amy Cowan, American Hereford Association marketing and shows coordinator, share these tips for photo day.

Dos

- ✦ Get to know your camera before the photo shoot, so that you have the settings to get the best shot.
- ✦ Have enough help on picture day.
- ✦ Have patience. It takes a lot of patience to get the right shot and it has been my experience that pictures do not tell a lie. Cattle photographs show up in a lot of places for many years, so if you settle for an average or less-than-average picture you will always be reminded that you maybe didn’t take the time to get it right.
- ✦ Make sure the weather is good; if it’s questionable, consider rescheduling.
- ✦ If the animals aren’t reacting properly, stop, rethink and change the photo setup.
- ✦ Make sure there’s nothing distracting in the backgrounds. You want a clean background, something eye appealing.
- ✦ When taking halter photos, offset the inside front foot and make sure the outside front foot is not too far ahead, set the front and then the back so that they are standing square before you mess with the back. It’s always best if you can get them to walk into it, as they look more natural.
- ✦ Get the head up and ears forward. Make sure the tail is down. Try to get the animal to turn its head slightly toward the camera.
- ✦ Be at the right angle. Do not to get too far in front or behind the animal.

Don’ts

- Don’t give up or get frustrated.
- Don’t work with the same animal too long. If you’re not getting the shot, send the animal back and try again later.
- Don’t have too many helpers in the picture area. Too many attention getters can be distracting to the animal. **HW**

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Digital vs. film

In recent years there has been transition from the standard film camera to digital ones. Most photographers would agree digital photography is the standard today. Digital cameras have continued to improve while the cost has become more affordable.

Prices are down. Resolution and, therefore, image quality are up.

A digital camera is not only the tool used to focus the image but also the device that records it. It serves both as camera and film. With a film camera, you aim at a

subject and press a shutter button. The shutter inside the camera lens opens to expose light to film inside, capturing the image onto the film. You fill up the roll of film, take it to a lab for developing and get photos or slides returned.

With a digital camera, you aim at a subject and press a shutter button. The shutter inside the camera lens opens to expose light to a small sensor inside, capturing the image onto a storage medium instead of film. You fill it up and then transfer your images to your computer, from which you can alter, print or e-mail them.

"I like the digital camera for several reasons," Birk explains. "It is

fast and efficient; digital storage cards can be reused over and over, and you can shoot a complete photo shoot on one card, reformat it and use it again the next day, saving a lot of money that I used to spend on film."

Costerisan says purchasing a digital camera is a better business decision. "Digital photography is a competitive advantage since the turn around time is faster and customers can have instant results," she says.

Birk warns that a digital camera will not make your photos better. "Sometimes digital is thought of as magical, that because it is a digital camera, it can do something special," Birk says. "It won't make you any better photographer than a film camera, but the fact that you can review your shots in playback mode is reassuring while you are shooting to know if you have what you need before you move on to the next animal."

Buying a camera

Photographers — amateurs and professionals alike — can choose from multiple high-end, consumer-level digital cameras that can produce images of acceptable size to print in a magazine or as an 8x10 photo.

"There are many digital cameras on the market today that are very good choices," Birk says. "They promote the higher megapixel cameras as better, but after a point most of them are adequate. The camera lens is perhaps more important, as you can zoom the lens to size the animal and get the look that you are after.

"I have used Nikon equipment for a long time. They are well built and have stood up to the abuse that they take on a daily basis. They get banged around and keep on clicking. I do try to always carry a backup in case. There are others that are real popular, such as the Canons. They are real good. It kind of depends on what you get started with, like trucks or tractors."

Cowan agrees with Birk. "There are a lot of nice digital cameras on the market right now that will do a very good job, but my best advice to you is to research the camera before you make your purchase and make sure it has what you need," she says. "I have always shot with Canon equipment

Consider these digital camera advantages, disadvantages**Digital cost advantages:**

- + No film to buy.
- + No processing costs.
- + No wasted film or unusable prints.
- + You can try numerous angles, exposures, etc., and erase the ones you don't want, instead of spending \$10 and up for a roll of 35mm film with processing. You upload your results to your computer, and you can have an instant slide show to review your results.
- + Cost of memory cards has plummeted, while capacity keeps getting greater.

**Digital convenience advantages:**

- + Instant results. You know immediately if the picture is worth saving. If it's not, you can delete it and try again.
- + No trips to the photofinisher.
- + Images are in digital form right out of the camera, so no scanning is needed.
- + Images can be indexed and archived on CD or DVD.
- + Reusable media. Medium is stable without refrigeration and will last indefinitely.
- + No bulky rolls of film to carry around.

**Digital disadvantages:**

- Digital cameras are more expensive, feature for feature, than film cameras.
- Digital cameras become obsolete much faster than film cameras.
- Battery life is short if you use the LCD screen.
- A digital image does not carry as much information as fine-grain film, so you cannot crop as deeply into the image and still have enough resolution for large prints.
- The time for digital cameras to process the image before capturing another image in comparison is typically longer than a typical 35mm camera. **HW**

and Canon has done a nice job improving its digital technology and has many different models of cameras to choose from that are user friendly and at different price points.”

If your intent is to use a digital image for publication in the *Hereford World* or another publication, your satisfaction with the end result will depend on your buying adequate equipment and your learning how to properly save and deliver the image to the publication.

“Before buying a camera determine what you want to use the images for,” Cowan suggests. “If you are taking photos for a print magazine or sale catalog they must be of high enough quality for print. I would recommend purchasing a 5-6 megapixel camera if you intend to have the pictures printed or if you want to enlarge them to 5×7 or 8×10. A lot of times we have digital images sent in to be used in the magazine and the files are only suited for Web use, meaning they are very small files that will not reproduce in the magazine or in a sale catalog.

Digital Photography Review has a digital camera comparison engine on its Web site at www.dpreview.com/reviews/compare.asp, which allows visitors to sort cameras that meet their buying criteria. Some of the more important features to consider are price, maximum resolution, optical zoom, manual focus option, flash options, storage types, image format options and camera weight.

The quality of a digital image, whether printed or displayed on a screen, depends in part on its resolution — the number of pixels (picture elements) used to create the image. The greater the number of pixels, the higher the resolution and the greater the detail and sharpness of the image will be. When you are purchasing a digital camera, it is important to know the size and quality of images it will be capable of taking. This is found by examining megapixel options. Megapixel refers to the maximum number of pixels that a camera will take on the highest quality setting (see Table 1, for megapixel comparisons).

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Table 1: Calculating the maximum acceptable image size for home printer and publication based on the digital file size captured based on camera resolution.

Minimum megapixel, in.	Digital file size, ^a pixels at 72 dpi	Photo printer print size, in. at 266 dpi	HW ^b print size, in.
1.3	640×480	4×6	1.805×2.407
2	1,280×960	5×7	3.608×4.811
3	1,600×1,200	8×10	4.511×6.015
4	2,048×1,536	Cropped 8×10	5.775×7.7
5	2,560×1,920	11×14	7.218×9.624

^aMinimum number of pixels for desired photo prints. This is with no cropping.

^bHereford World

Digital camera shopping tips

Ready to buy a digital camera? Here are *PC World's* recommendations:



- **Match megapixels to your use.** Most point-and-shoot cameras offer at least 5 megapixels, which is plenty for producing 11-by-14-inch prints. Cameras with more megapixels will yield even larger prints and allow you to blow up a part of an image with less likelihood that the print will be blurry. If you plan to make only 4-by-6-inch prints, you don't have to shoot at the camera's highest resolution — and as a result, you can fit more shots on your memory card.
- **Look for rechargeable batteries and a charger.** The cost of disposable batteries adds up over the long run. Some cameras can use AA batteries of any type — disposable or rechargeable. That capability can be helpful if your rechargeable batteries run out of juice and you don't want to wait while they replenish.
- **Disregard digital zoom.** Most cameras offer at least 3X optical zoom — and some boast an optical zoom as high as 15X. But sometimes vendors tout a high total zoom that includes digital zoom, which you should disregard. Digital zoom produces photos that are inferior to those produced with an optical zoom.
- **Look for a low-light focusing aid.** Some cameras have auxiliary lights that help them focus in dim settings. These aids are important for many indoor shots.
- **Try the camera before you buy.** Some cameras have commands and menus that are easier to use than others, a comparison you can make only with a hands-on trial. Also evaluate the lag time between when you press the shutter button and when the camera actually takes the picture. Try the zoom lens. Does it operate quickly and smoothly? Find out how long you must wait between taking pictures. And try the LCD viewfinder — in the sun, if possible — to determine how easy it is to read.
- **Give extra consideration to a camera with a good selection of software.** Look for useful packages such as Adobe Photoshop Elements, Ulead PhotolImpact and Corel Snapfire for editing images as well as applications for organizing and sharing them.
- **Don't base your decision on video capability.** Any still camera's ability to take moving pictures is limited. If you want to shoot video, invest in a camcorder dedicated to the job.
- **Consider investing in a memory card reader or a camera dock.** A memory card reader acts like an external hard drive attached to your PC or laptop, allowing you to download pictures directly from your camera's storage media. Many newer laptops have one or more memory card slots built in, as do some inkjet printers. If you have a second memory card, you can keep shooting while the images download, rather than having to keep the camera hooked up to your PC. Alternatively, some cameras come with a dock or offer one as an option, and some of these docks offer a dedicated button for uploading all of your new photos onto a memory card. A dock also charges the camera's battery. **HW**

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When taking cattle photos it is nice to be able to get close-up shots without having to move physically closer to the subject. To do this you need a camera with a zoom. When buying a camera be sure not to confuse digital and optical zoom.

The more megapixels you have, the larger both the physical size and the file size of the photo will be. Photos need to be of higher quality to be printed at larger sizes. A regular 35mm negative image is equivalent to a 10 or more megapixel digital image. The advantages of having a high number of pixels are twofold: (1) The more pixels you have, the better print quality you'll have, especially at larger sizes, and (2) The more pixels you have, the more flexibility you will have in cropping.

The importance of zoom

As Birk says, when taking cattle photographs it's nice to be able to get closer without having to move physically closer to the subject. To do this, you must have a camera with a zoom. When buying a camera, do not confuse digital zoom with optical zoom.

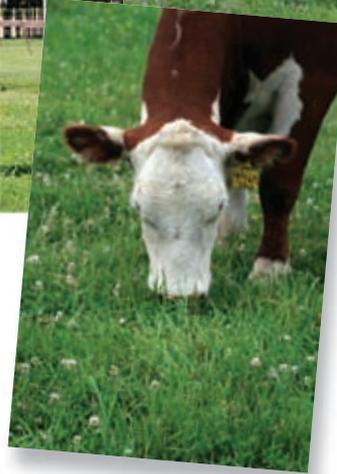
Digital zoom is not worth having according to www.digitalcamerabasics.com. Information on the site recommends not allowing it to affect your purchase decisions. A digital zoom simply takes the center of the photo and digitally enlarges it. The image quality suffers and lacks detail, and you don't have a true zoom photo.

Optical zoom is a real zoom, which works much like binoculars

or a small telescope, that lets the camera move the lens back and forth to bring the subject you're aiming at closer. Many cameras have an optical zoom and a digital zoom and will use these features to try to make the camera sound as if its zoom is larger than it is. For example, a camera may have a 3X optical zoom and a 2X digital zoom in the camera, and the maker advertises that it "Comes with a 6X zoom." Another thing to remember is what a real zoom is; a 2X optical zoom is just barely greater than what you would see with your naked eye. It's not really a "zoom," so to speak. Many cameras have a 3X optical zoom, which will bring you a bit closer to the subject. But if you want to take photos of cattle, distant scenic shots and so on, you'll need to spend more money and find cameras that offer 5X through 10X optical zooms.

Photo editing

With the use of digital cameras and computer software comes the opportunity to enhance photos. You can do almost anything with



a photo today. With this technology, it's important to consider what is ethical and unethical.

For producers who advertise in the *Hereford World* or who have promotional pieces done by Creative Services, there are rules regarding photo enhancements. "For a fee, we will clean up a background; take out a nose bug; remove a halter; remove dirt, manure or grass around an animal's legs; and convert a show photo to a pasture shot," says Caryn Vaught, *Hereford World* production manager. "We will not change the contour of the animal or any part of its body in any way. If we receive a photo that looks like the

It's better to go without a photo than to use a bad photo.

animal's shape has been altered, we will request the original, non-edited image before printing."

For more about working with digital photos, see Page 187.

Remember photos used in marketing are a direct representation of the animal as well as of you and your breeding program. If you are not proud of an image, the logical choice may be to try to take the photo again, use a photo of a relative to represent the genetics of the animal or just go without. **HW**

Suggestions for working with digital photos

If you make the move to a digital camera, a question you must answer is, "What do I do with the images?" It's important to archive raw images on a CD, DVD or other storage medium before opening or saving. Do not open and "save as"; just duplicate the image. After the image has been edited and prepped, you should store the final image as well.

The most common digital image format is JPEG, which stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group, the original name of the committee that wrote the standard. It is used to make large image files smaller and more manageable by discarding unnecessary information. The only other common alternative is TIFF; this produces a larger, uncompressed file.

JPEG is a "lossy" format, meaning that the decompressed image isn't quite the same as the one you started with. JPEG is designed to exploit known limitations of the human eye, notably that small color changes are perceived less accurately than small changes in brightness. The real disadvantage of lossy compression is that you lose image quality each time you compress an image.

Even professional cameras will have a JPEG mode, and, despite its lossy compression, it has become the standard image format for electronic storage of photographic images. The reason for this is the compression algorithm's ability to reduce an image file size by 8- or 10-to-1 without any degradation in image quality to the human eye at normal viewing magnification.

A 1.5 MB, 3-megapixel JPEG image will be hard to distinguish from the same image saved as a lossless TIFF weighing in at 9.2 MB. But, if the image is run through a press printer, such as what's used to print the *Hereford World*, a noticeable difference can be seen in photo quality.

When you are editing an image in several sessions, it is recommended that you save the intermediate image in an uncompressed format (TIFF or BMP) to avoid the accumulation of JPEG losses. The losses occur in the image's quality because the JPEG format continues to compress the image. So only compress (save as a JPEG) after all editing is done.

If you expect to edit your image again in the future, keep a lossless master copy to work from. The JPEG you put up on your Web site should be a derived copy, not your editing master.

Another file format option is RAW. This is simply the raw data collected; no in-camera processing is performed. The advantage is that a RAW file is lossless, but the size is considerably smaller than a TIFF file. The image has not been processed, sharpened or white balanced, which means you can correct the image, and it's a better representation of the 'digital negative' captured.

The disadvantage is you can't open these image files with a normal photo package without using an 'acquire module' (a plug-in, typically TWAIN, which can open/process such images. Most upper-end cameras come with the acquire software). There is not a universal RAW format that is common among all camera brands. Each make is different, causing a problem that can lead to confusion among consumers.

Some cameras come with software that allows you to choose different format options such as to e-mail and print. To learn more about the software, read the owner's manual. Below is a list of tips/steps to follow when using photo-editing software such as Adobe Photoshop.

Sending to HPI

For the best reproduction, send your raw file to Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI) before any editing or manipulation is done. This will allow the HPI staff to optimize, size and color-correct your photo to get the best results possible. Note: HPI can't make an image any better than what it is — you can't add pixels if the data are not there or make a photo that is out of focus in focus.

Mail HPI the flash card or digital media with the unaltered original file. Be sure to duplicate the card or media before mailing the original. If you prefer not to send the flash card, you can burn the image to CD or duplicate to a ZIP disk. Again, don't open and save, just copy the image. If you want to e-mail the file, do not open and size it down. Use "ZIP" or "Stuffit" to compress the file size.

For more help don't hesitate to call the HPI office. Don't print out a copy of your file on your home printer and send it to us. Image quality is lost if HPI scans a printout of a digital image. In essence you'd be scanning a second-generation image, and image detail is lost with each generation.

To e-mail to friends, customers

- + Open image.
- + Color-correct, lighten and sharpen your image (if needed).
- + Image size photo to 4x6 at 72 dpi. The smaller width and height you make the image, the faster it will be to e-mail.
- + "Save As" image with new name as a JPEG. Be sure not to use special characters when naming and to remove all spacing.
- + Open e-mail program, and start new message. Using the attach option (paperclip icon in most e-mail programs), browse and find your image and attach it to your message.
- + Address the message, and include any text you also want to send.
- + Send it for friends and family to enjoy.

To print on photo printer

- + Open image.
- + Color-correct, lighten and sharpen your image (if needed).
- + Crop and size photo to desired dimensions (for printing purposes you want the resolution to be 300 dpi).

Some photo-editing software programs have photo-printing package options from which you can select, and the program will format the pictures for you. For example if you want a 4x6 and a 5x7 you select that package, and it will do the work and put it on a new canvas for you to print with both images on the same page.

If you don't have a computer, you can buy a photo printer with a FlashCard reader that allows you to print directly from the FlashCard. You can also take your card to a photo processor, such as Wal-Mart or Walgreens that has the capabilities of printing from your digital medium. **HW**

