

BOARD ACTION

The American Hereford Association (AHA) Board of Directors met in Kansas City, Mo., April 14 and 15 for its spring meeting. Highlights of the meeting are as follows:

The 2011 AHA Spring Board Meeting included a host of committee meetings and reports dedicated to breed improvement initiatives, marketing and communications, member services, and organization finances.

Breed improvement

Genomic research: Dorian Garrick, Iowa State University (ISU) Lush Chair in animal breeding and genetics and National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium executive director, reported on the progress of the AHA and ISU genomics project (see Page 170).

Garrick reported that approximately 1,100 Hereford animals have been genotyped with the 50,000 SNP panel for research and gene marker discovery purposes. Early findings out of 850 samples indicate relationships among traits and specific Hereford gene markers that could enhance the accuracy of expected progeny differences (EPDs) including birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and milk.

The current EPD analysis system is not set up to utilize gene markers to enhance the EPD accuracy, and Garrick warned against the confusion that would take place if an association released a molecular breeding value and a conventional EPD for the same trait. The Board agreed that the two should be used together in creating one EPD that is genetically enhanced.

The Board acknowledged that resources should be devoted to working with Agriculture Research Business Institute (ARBI), AHA's EPD analysis provider, to develop a sound strategy for incorporating the DNA results into the analysis. Furthermore, the Board discussed and encouraged staff to evaluate the best approach for incorporating molecular data into the genetic evaluation even if it means considering more than two runs a year. Other aspects that must be studied are laboratory requirements

including long-term technology requirements and costs.

Fertility research: Mike MacNeil, research geneticist at Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory, Miles City, Mont., reported that the AHA had over 44,000 females represented by more than 3,800 sires in the sustained cow fertility study. Since 2000 the AHA has collected whole herd cow enrollments and asked for cow fertility reports in an effort to generate a database that might eventually be used to calculate the heritability of cow fertility.

MacNeil is working to develop predictions for EPDs utilizing the whole-herd data. The current models set up much like the milk EPD in a sire model format. The AHA will be ready to commercialize such an EPD in the next year.

Heifer calving rate and mature weight: The AHA is working on traits that will access two major cost drivers of the industry — fertility and maintenance cost. Heifer calving rate and mature weight are two traits currently being researched that will be used for calculating profit indexes in the future.

Functional defects: Jon Beever, University of Illinois molecular geneticist, continues to collect DNA from Hereford cattle displaying a functional defect. There are a multitude of functional defects that breeders cull for each year, not just in the Hereford breed but across breeds. Beever is working on those within the Hereford breed in an effort to isolate genetic causes of those defects that might eventually be used in longevity calculations.

Disposition research: The AHA currently has more than 15,000 chute scores that are being evaluated to determine if there are genetic differences in disposition. Chute scores collected at weaning time have been identified by the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF)

as a viable means of determining the flightiness of beef cattle. AHA research partners will be evaluating the data to determine if heritability estimates can be determined.

Multi-breed pilot project: Last year the AHA Board approved the development of a pilot project with the purpose of collecting phenotype data from cattle of other breeds, predominantly Angus and Angus × Hereford crosses, which can be directly compared in the same contemporary group with registered Hereford cattle. So far, 25 breeders have agreed to submit their data for further research purposes.

Hereford Publications Inc.

The *Hereford World* and Creative Services departments are having a very good year providing advertising and artistic design services to AHA members. The Board acknowledged the increasing popularity of the *Hereford World* "ride-along" sale catalog business, whereby production sale catalogs are sent to every Hereford member along with the magazine. Total sales as of midyear are up 3% from a year ago.

The Board was informed that Tommy Coley has been hired and is in full swing servicing the Southeast region. The Board approved the hiring of Dustin Layton to service the Southwest region on a contract basis, which will also allow Dustin to conduct his sale management business.

The Board discussed the request by breeders to not publish addresses of the individual respective buyers of top lots in their production sale reports. It was decided to allow breeders to choose what information they would like published in their sale report.

Member service committee

The Board was informed of the progress being made in the upgrade of the current registration system to a new and more modern platform. Staff

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explained the records department was being trained on the new system, running registration data through both systems simultaneously. The new system should be up and running by midsummer, and new online utilities will be developed for release in the fall.

The Board asked staff to continue to survey the membership on a variety of topics related to service, customer care and education. Furthermore, webinars are to be developed to help members with a variety of subjects.

Marketing committee

The AHA will have a new Annual Meeting format in October. Look for details of the new schedule and headquarters hotel in this issue on Page 16, future issues and in *Hereford eNews*.

The AHA Board approved the plan to host a media tour Sept. 19-20 that will invite agriculture press

and radio media guests on a trip from Denver to Scottsbluff, Neb., where media will tour Olsen Ranch, a research partner for the National Reference Sire Program.

The Board and staff will communicate the strategic research initiatives and progress being made in the area of breed improvement, genetic research and feed efficiency data collection. AHA is working diligently to be a national leader in data collection and discovery of genetic information related to all economic traits collected by the breed.

BuyHereford.com manager: The Board endorsed the development of a position to cultivate online marketing and cattle sales through *BuyHereford.com* along with video marketing services.

Educational video library: Staff was instructed to develop a series of educational programs that will assist both new and experienced Hereford breeders in a host of areas.

Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC

The AHA Board was informed of the progress of CHB and the growth of both food service and retail (see Page 12). The Board encouraged members of the CHB board to move forward in identifying a CHB LLC general manager.

Youth program, HYFA

The Board was informed of the special planned Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) event scheduled to be in Sonoma, Calif., Aug. 18-21. The event will be hosted at the Kunde Family Estates by the Jim and Marcia Mickelson family.

In addition, the Board approved the reproduction of two of the historic AHA paintings located in the AHA offices — one, “Anxiety the 4th,” and the other, “Silver” — to be reproduced for HYFA fund-raising activities. **HW**