

# Strength and Resolve



Craig Huffhines

The inscription on the James Farley Post Office in New York City reads: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

This claim may not necessarily hold true for today's U.S. Postal Service, but the resolve of the American farmer and rancher goes way beyond this claim and might sound something more like this: "Neither blizzards nor floods nor devastating tornadoes nor drought-stricken lands bursting into flames will deter the resolve of our American farmers and ranchers."

Certainly, this year has been volatile, to say the least; a late spring blizzard blasted the Dakotas, resulting in a devastating calf loss; tornadoes ripped up the Southeast and Midwest; unprecedented snowpack in the Rocky Mountains combined with record spring rains across the northern plains is flooding Montana, the Dakotas and the states along the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers.

While there are those who are swimming and dodging, the Southwest is experiencing one of the worst droughts on record as range country in Texas and New Mexico burst into flames like a tinder box. Yes, this has been a highly unusual year for volatile weather patterns that have

put added stress and strain on much of the country. The loss has been great.

At a time when cow-calf profits have never been so good and when Hereford demand is approaching an amazing level, not just domestically but abroad as well, it's ironic that the weather has reached historically volatile levels. Mother Nature always has a way of humbling us even during the best of times. Maybe we should keep that in mind and be thankful for what we have when there are so many that have lost so much this spring.

## AHA's unique position in genomics

I am often asked, "What is the American Hereford Association (AHA) doing about genomics and why are we not utilizing the tests promoted by Igenity and Pfizer?"

The answer is very simple: the AHA Board and staff have done their homework. The tests that have been commercialized among the two big pharmaceutical firms have been proven to add very little, if not anything, to the accuracy of the AHA's national cattle evaluation. Our business cannot afford to spend money on expensive tests that do not advance breed improvement. Additional investment in research that will deliver reliability is a must before products hit the market.

Proudly, the AHA has developed a long-term strategy to discover gene markers for economically relevant traits that will help us identify younger animals with higher accuracies. This possibility is principally due to the collaboration with Iowa State University, the University of Missouri and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) along with the contributions of Hereford breeders who have donated semen and funds to support the National Reference Sire Program (NRSP) in an effort to build a DNA database that will eventually find genetic tools that will be affordable and accurate.

See Page 170 of this issue for an update on Hereford genomics. Thanks go to all involved including our AHA Board and staff and our own Hereford breeders along with our friends from the Canadian, Uruguay, Argentine, Australian and New Zealand Hereford associations, who are working together to contribute to the discovery of gene markers of specific interest to the Hereford breed. **HW**