

Continuing the Journey



Jack Ward

I want to take this opportunity to let everyone know how honored I am to have been selected as the next executive vice president of the American Hereford Association (AHA), and I would also like to thank everyone who made a phone call or sent a kind note or email.

As a youngster growing up in the middle of farm country in central Indiana, I would have not dreamed that I would be holding this prestigious position. However, even growing up in corn country, I was always a livestock guy and, more specifically, a cattle guy. My family has always been involved in the seedstock industry, and my life's journey has taken me places and given me opportunities that I only dreamed of as a boy.

The AHA is blessed to have so much history and breeders who are committed to working through the challenges that face the beef industry, and, more importantly, these members look at these challenges as

opportunities. The beef industry in the U.S. has seen record revenues over the past few years due to shrinking cow numbers, caused mainly by drought conditions throughout the Southwest. In most regions, excluding California and other Western regions, the rains have changed the complexion of pasture lands, and we are beginning to see some rebuilding and expansion of commercial cow herds.

Again, this growth will work in the favor of the Hereford breed because of the commitment of our members to stay true to documenting genetics and making the right kind of culling decisions. Continuing this commitment will be imperative for the breed to stay at the top of the mind of the commercial industry.

During the past 12 years, as I worked as the director of breed improvement, the message was clear. I urged breeders to make selections based on the needs of their customers and to use the

tools made available to them by the AHA to help make those decisions. That message will be the same today, and I promise that the AHA staff will stay committed to developing all tools and traits possible for you to make those decisions.

As I moved to the second-floor executive vice president's office of the AHA building, I left a small piece of paper under the glass top of my old desk downstairs for the next person who fills that seat. It reads like this, "EPDs (expected progeny differences) are like a skill saw — used properly they vastly improve your ability to build the end product but if used improperly can cause a real wreck."

I have always believed in this theory, and I have always realized that each breeder needs to find the traits that make the difference to his program and then combine the EPD traits with the visual phenotype that is needed to make the necessary change. In other words, stay disciplined to your needs and beliefs.

I love the seedstock cattle business, and as we move this breed forward, I hope that each of you will feel comfortable reaching out to me with any type of comments or concerns that you have, not only for the Hereford breed but for the entire beef industry. I look forward to continuing the journey. **HW**

