



At the Helm

Jack Ward named American Hereford Association executive vice president.

by Angie Stump Denton



With deep roots in the beef cattle industry, a passion to lead and a commitment to the Hereford breed, Jack Ward was selected as the American Hereford Association (AHA) executive vice president (EVP) on May 18.

Jack has served as AHA's chief operating officer and director of breed improvement since he joined the AHA team in 2003. As EVP, Jack will lead, direct, manage or support all functions of the Association, including serving as the Association secretary. Reporting directly to the AHA Board, he will develop and recommend policies, plans and programs to effectively meet the needs and challenges of the membership and to enhance the growth and reputation of the Hereford breed and the AHA.

"After a rigorous search, Jack was an inspired choice by the Board," says Eric Walker, AHA president and a Hereford breeder from Morrison, Tenn. "His knowledge and experience of all aspects of the seedstock industry combined with his commitment and respect for the Hereford breed and its members made him the choice candidate.

"He cares deeply about organizational development, the people who work at AHA and our Hereford members. We believe he will continue to lead the Association as the breed continues to increase market share in the commercial industry."

Involved in the seedstock industry since birth, Jack was active in 4-H and FFA, showing cattle, sheep and pigs while growing up in Indiana. He earned his associate of science degree from Black Hawk East, Kewanee, Ill., and his bachelor's degree in agriculture economics from Purdue University.

AHA tenure

As director of breed improvement, he has helped lead AHA's strategic emphasis on creating demand

for Hereford cattle through the use of all genetic tools, including the promotion of Whole Herd Reporting, DNA technology and new economically relevant traits.

Jack's leadership has created increased interest and participation in the Association's National Reference Sire Program (NRSP) and testing Hereford genetics in real-world commercial settings. During his tenure, AHA has increased the number of commercial cows used in testing young sires from 700 to 2,000.

He was also instrumental in AHA's development of genomic-enhanced expected progeny differences (GE-EPDs) and other breed improvement strategies such as the newly released udder EPDs.

"Jack understands what it takes to keep the Hereford breed at the forefront of the technology and what appeals to the commercial industry," says Jack Holden, a Hereford breeder from Valier, Mont., and a member of the EVP search committee. "He thinks outside the box and is willing take on challenges to help us improve and continue to gain commercial market share."

Since joining the AHA team, Jack has worked to increase the use of artificial insemination (AI) within the breed. He has collaborated with the major AI studs to increase the use of Hereford genetics through commercial marketing. According to the National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB), Hereford semen sales (domestic and foreign) in 2003 were 80,812 units sold but in 2013 (latest reported) were 164,546 units sold, an increase of 104%.

Through the years, he has promoted the value of using high accuracy AI sires within the seedstock industry. Since 2003, the AHA has seen a 51% increase in AI use and seven of the top 10 bulls last year by registration were owned by AI studs. Under Jack's direction, the AHA developed an open AI program that allows members to

register calves without the need of an AI certificate.

Seedstock experience

Along with his solid background in Association work, Jack also has real-world seedstock experience, as he spent 16 years managing several predominant seedstock operations and most recently working as a managing partner of Maple Lane Angus. While at Maple Lane, he also sorted both feeder and fed cattle at the local livestock auction barn that marketed more than 1,000 head of cattle weekly.

"While my current position provides insight into the dynamics of a breed association, I believe my work as a farm manager and managing partner gave me the most relevance as to the interests and challenges facing the Association members," Jack explains. "The seedstock cattle business literally paid my bills for many years, and I know well the effort and satisfaction that accompany an annual production sale, the importance of marketing and the consequences of daily management details.

"My work at a sale barn helping sort and market cattle provided me with additional real-world experience. In these roles, I worked closely with seedstock breeders,

commercial cattlemen, and junior exhibitors and their families and have an appreciation for their role and reliance on Hereford cattle and association services."

A people business

"As much as I love and believe in the cattle business, I also value the people-side of our industry," he explains. "I am equally as comfortable sitting down with a Ph.D. to discuss proposals for genetic research as I am sitting down with a new breeder to help decipher the latest sire evaluation

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Jack played an integral role in planning and facilitating the Hereford Genetic Summit in September 2014.



Jack is known throughout the industry as an educator and talented speaker. He has spoken at numerous events throughout the country and in foreign countries.

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report and talk to them about the current tools available to Hereford members. These represent the great variations and needs within our industry, and I appreciate the importance and significance of that diversity.”

Jack is recognized throughout the industry for his ability to effectively communicate and educate. He has traveled across the U.S. and overseas to lead educational forums.

A proponent of performance data coupled with phenotypically correct cattle, Jack has judged livestock shows for more than 30 years in the U.S. and six foreign countries.

Leadership

“Jack is a balanced and complete leader — from leadership to technical knowledge,” explains

Butch Funk, a Hereford breeder from Copperas Cove, Texas, and a member of the EVP search committee. “He’s not a ‘yes’ man. He has a balanced moral compass and is a man of conviction. The Hereford breed will continue to evolve with Jack’s leadership.”

Holden agrees with Funk saying Jack has exhibited true leadership during his tenure at AHA and has proven himself and that he is committed to the long-term future of the breed.

“He has the personality and respect to be a ‘great face’ and executive of our breed,” Holden says.

Jack serves on the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) board of directors — having served from 2006 to 2010 and then re-elected to the board in 2014. In 2013, BIF honored Jack with its

Continuing Service Award for his contributions to BIF past, present and future.

He currently serves on the Ultrasound Guidelines Council (UGC), the Scientific Advisory Board for the Feed Efficiency Project and the beef species advisory board for the National Animal Germplasm Program.

At home

Family is a very important part of his life. Jack and his wife, Mary Ann, reside in Plattsburg, Mo., and have two sons — Cameron and Carter. Cameron is a senior at the University of Southern Indiana, and Carter is a sophomore at Black Hawk East. Jack and Mary Ann raised both boys involved in agriculture and both have a passion for showing and raising livestock.

The Ward family has 25 registered cows. They use artificial insemination (AI) extensively and make breeding decisions based on balance traits with as much spread as possible in traits of economic importance including disposition, structure and hair (fescue-tolerant cattle).

Jack is also active in his community. He’s a member of St. Ann’s Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus. Jack has served as president of the Clinton County Extension Council and has been a 4-H beef leader in Clinton County.

“As executive vice president, I will strive to encourage a culture that enhances the skills and expertise of our competent and qualified staff with the direction and guidance of the AHA Board while continually monitoring the needs and interests of our diverse membership,” Jack says. “It is both humbling and an honor to lead an organization that has been such a major part of my life and my life’s work.” **HW**



The Ward family pictured (l to r) are Carter, Jack, Mary Ann and Cameron.