



Beyond a Vacation

*A young Hereford breeder experiences a trip of
a lifetime to the World Hereford Conference.*

by Miranda Stotz





Who could ask for a better vacation when three of my favorite things are involved: travel, Hereford cattle and the people who breed them?

My trip to the 17th World Hereford Conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, April 18-25, was an unbelievable experience, and I am excited to offer you my experiences in the hopes that they will give you a glimpse of this incredible event.

This is Uruguay's second time hosting the conference with the first being in 1980. The breed has continued to advance exponentially in those 36 years both in quantity and quality. The convention took place in the city of Montevideo, which is located right off the Rio de la Plata — so, the city's edge is all stunning beaches. However, to get a view of the countryside, the tours took groups into the heart of Uruguay to witness the outstanding operations across the country's landscape.

The conference

My first event in Uruguay was a bus ride to the Kiyu Hereford Breeding Test Station, which is one of Uruguay's greatest tools for breed improvement. Established in 1976, the station has created an opportunity for Hereford breeders by researching feed efficiency in their bull crops.

The program has evolved into an innovative study of young bulls around 10 months of age from approximately 40 ranches in the country. The study is used to track feed efficiency and carcass value in accordance with genetics.

This program lends itself to the Uruguayan goal of creating a more efficient breeding tool for the country's herds. This trip was also my first time to witness the Uruguayan cowboys, or "gauchos," in action. All week, gauchos worked cattle by horse, with no ATV (all-terrain vehicle) in sight.

On the second day, it was pouring down rain, but that didn't put a damper on the day's festivities as the group headed to the Rural Association of Uruguay in Montevideo to get a glimpse of the livestock and to enjoy the pen show.

The Rural Association of Uruguay has a set of stunning barns and an outside arena where the show takes place. Watching the pen show was an indescribable experience; while viewing the cattle and looking through the pedigrees, it was hard not to



notice the international influence of genetics from numerous countries, which could be seen woven into the Uruguayan bloodlines.

At the end of the day, everyone headed to one of the barns to enjoy some local wine and socializing. The third day marked the start of the conference sessions, which began with an informational talk on Uruguay's ecological characteristics and productive systems, allowing everyone to better understand Uruguay's unique herd systems.

Next there was a discussion of the ID system used in Uruguay as well as some of the new technologies involved. The sessions ended with the

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Uruguayan cowboys, or "gauchos," worked cattle by horse.

PHOTO BY JANEL SHAW



The Rural Association of Uruguay hosted a show.

PHOTO BY JANEL SHAW



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American Hereford Association Executive Vice President Jack Ward addressed attendees during the conference.

Becoming a world traveler

Miranda Stotz, Skiatook, Okla., was presented the OXO World Traveler Scholarship during the National Western Stock Show National Hereford Show Jan. 16 in Denver. The late Marilyn Matasovic made this scholarship possible in memory of her parents, Estelle and John Matasovic of OXO Herefords in southwestern Colorado.

The scholarship provided \$4,500 in travel funds for Stotz to attend the 2016 World Hereford Conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, April 17-23.

The Matasovics loved Herefords and travel. They attended nine World Hereford Conferences and enjoyed the wonders of faraway countries and customs. This inspired Matasovic to create the scholarship to honor her parents.

Stotz, 20, is the daughter of Max and Karen Stotz. She will be a senior at Tarleton State University, working toward a degree in animal science. She plans to earn her master's degree in genetics.

She has been a National Junior Hereford Association and Junior Hereford Association of Oklahoma member for 13 years. She's been showing cattle all her life and was the champion intermediate showman at the 2013 Junior National Hereford Expo. **HW**



Miranda Stotz, Skiatook, Okla., was presented the OXO World Traveler Scholarship during the 2016 National Western Stock Show in Denver. Pictured (l to r) are: Taylor Belle Matheny, 2015-16 National Hereford Queen; Stotz; and John Swiercinsky, grandson of Estelle and John Matasovic, in whose honor the award is given.

country reports, which gave a brief glimpse into each country's herd.

By far my favorite day of the conference was Thursday, which focused on the genetic aspect of the breed. The talks discussed the benefits of genetic testing, proposed ways to fund or encourage its use, and refreshed the push for the implementation of an international identification system. Only by collaborating data and creating a strategy to ID animals jointly can we increase accuracy of testing and its result as well as to reduce the waste of resources like testing the same animal several times.

Another topic discussed was the accuracy of and the methods used to blend the genetic predictions we gather with the pedigree information. The last subject for the day drew the crowd's attention to index use and the discussion of economic value in relation to our end goal. The talk encouraged breeders, researchers and all participants in the product cycle to pay attention to the traits that drive the economic indexes and not exclusively to the indexes.

To conclude the day, we had the opportunity to listen to motivational speaker Gustavo Zerbino, who is one of the 16 survivors of the 1972 airplane crash involving Uruguay's rugby team in the Andes. To cap the night off, we enjoyed the gala sales as well as a traditional Uruguayan dance coined the "candombe."

The last day of the conference was relaxed as participants observed the female and bull shows. After viewing a great group of cattle, we attended the gala dinner, where each country presented a gift to the host country. We experienced marvelous Uruguayan Hereford beef and said a final goodbye to those traveling back home.

Post-tour

Although the conference was a phenomenal experience, the post-tour was where my best memories were made. Early Saturday morning the buses loaded and headed across country to Las Anitas, a family owned and operated ranch with more than 1,500 cows, which has been running for more than 80 years.

The ranch's owners allowed us to view a large portion of their top-quality stock by using horses to cut out certain cows from the large herd. It was neat to witness the horse work as well as to learn about the ranch's herd and production style.

That night we went to a small rural fairground for food, wine and live entertainment provided by a local guitarist. The next day we journeyed farther into the heart of the country to El Paraiso, where we took a tour of the pastured cattle, and I was finally able to comprehend the scale of the grass finishing system used throughout Uruguay.

Uruguay is primarily a grass-finish cattle country with very few feedlots, so almost all cattle are

finished on grass pasture. It was an exhilarating sight to see nothing but Herefords for miles upon miles thriving on the native grassland.

Next we moved to the main house to peruse the showstock. The owner told us that the town was built around the ranch because of how many people worked there to take care of the large amount of land and cattle.

The next stop was only a short bus ride down the road to El Baqueano, a portion of the old El Paraiso estancia; so, both ranches are extended family. One of the owners is Santiago Bordaberry, who had judged the pen show earlier in the week. The family allowed us to view not only their impressive cow and bull herds, but also their Criolla horse herd and Corriedale sheep flock.

El Baqueano is located on typical Uruguayan basalt fields and grazes its sheep and cattle together. The night ended with us sitting down with the family and getting to know them as well as enjoying some traditional Uruguayan food accompanied by live music. The final day we loaded on the buses and made our way to San Jose del Yaguari, where the family greeted us in traditional Uruguayan dress.

San Jose del Yaguari is home to around 14,000 head of cattle, and we were able to view more than 500 head of its select cattle that were being prepared for sale. The ranch boasts numerous champions, including 17 grand champions at the Prado show.

Concluding the trip, we all enjoyed one last meal, lots of laughter and a few stories before loading back on the buses to go home.

International bonds

As my time in Uruguay came to an end, I cannot begin to describe the experiences and friendships I was able to create because of this incredible opportunity. I also cannot thank the numerous ranch hosts and volunteers enough for their overwhelming generosity — they made Uruguay seem like home. I also want to thank every person I met on the trip; while I may have been one of the youngest participants, I felt as if I was traveling with family by the end of the week.

Lastly, I want to thank the Swiercinsky family and note my appreciation for the late Marilyn Matasovic who made this scholarship possible in memory of her parents Estelle and John Matasovic, because without the OXO World Traveler Scholarship, I would never have been able to gain this experience of a lifetime.

I learned so much over the course of the week, but my greatest takeaway was my newfound outlook on the global impact the Hereford breed is developing and its potential in the future. We must continue to cultivate strong international bonds so we can reach the ultimate goal of continued improvement of the breed. **HW**

Uruguay's beef production

The República Oriental del Uruguay is located in the Southern Cone of South America, bordering with Brazil on the north and northeast, Argentina to the west and the Rio de la Plata and the Atlantic Ocean to the south and southeast, respectively.

Thanks to a mild climate, Uruguay's main production is based on livestock and agriculture. The country is located in one of the most extensive cattle and

sheep breeding regions of the world with its large agricultural and livestock neighboring countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile.

Nearly 80% of the country's land is devoted to livestock and is home to 11 million head of cattle — with six million head being Hereford.

Traceability is mandatory for 100% of cattle stock and every packing plant in the country. The process begins

on the farm when the animal is born and continues until the final product, through an electronic information system (Black Boxes) with ISO 27001 Certification, audited by the British Standards Institute (BSI).

The use of hormones, antibiotics and animal proteins in animals' feed is forbidden by law.

— Information provided by
HerefordUruguay2016.org

