



BIF Focuses on Helping Producers Be Economically Sound

The 2008 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Research Symposium and Annual Meeting was June 30-July 3 in Calgary, Canada. It is always interesting to be a part of and to attend that event for several reasons.

First of all, as a member of the BIF board of directors, it gives me an opportunity to sit around a table and be involved with some of the really strong thinkers in the industry. This board is unique because it includes breed association representatives, ranchers and members of academia. Sitting around a room with these folks to discuss opportunities and issues concerning the beef industry has been a real experience for me. In April this board had a strategic planning meeting at the American Hereford Association (AHA) office to set some goals for the organization for the next few years.

During the meeting in Calgary, the obvious underlying tone to the meeting was to find ways for beef producers to make more informed decisions that would allow for more efficient beef production. In other words, how do producers stay economically sound? Kee Jim, Canada Beef Export Federation chair and a Hereford breeder, explained this problem best when he said, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is pretty pale in comparison to the economic issues that face the beef industry due to increased costs in feed and energy.



For generations the beef industry has been basically driven to increase more output. North America had a distinct advantage as a low-cost, high-throughput industry that could produce high-quality beef relatively cheap compared to many other countries. Feed supplies were plentiful, and we could basically drive value by producing more pounds without concerning ourselves with input costs.

This notion is obviously changing and has become a real concern in North America. Jim said that this might be the first time in the history of the industry that fails to see any segment being profitable. He also mentioned that the predicament in Canada is even more painful than the one in the U.S because Canada must export more than 50% of its beef supply in order to keep the industry viable.

So, what are some of the options for us to keep this industry that we love and know lucrative and strong? Gary Smith of Colorado State University and Dave Nichols of Nichols Farms in Iowa told a morning session that we must add value and then capture that value in all segments of the industry. Adding value starts at the cow-calf level which specifically applies to AHA members.

It starts by supplying the right kind of predictable genetics to your producers. As Dave mentioned, he makes culling decisions based on many performance traits, and some of those are not even given to potential buyers. In other words, he thinks it is his obligation to measure as much

as he can to provide his customers with the genetics they can use to provide the industry with the right kind of product. In turn, he helps his customers add value to their product by providing them market opportunities. This is the same basic concept that Smith detailed, and he added that animal welfare is a real issue that interests customers.

Breed improvement issues

So, what were the topics of interest from the standpoint of breed improvement? DNA markers and marker-assisted evaluations were obviously the big buzzwords. These issues are no different from many of the last few BIF meetings. It was, however, very refreshing to hear from academia about the research that is going on to include markers into genetic evaluations.

What will be important for the AHA and its membership in the future? Continue to collect data and measure all traits. AHA members need to continue to measure all traits of production with this data so that we will be able to work on research in the areas of feed efficiency, health, fertility and even disposition.

In the meantime, continue to do what you do best — find cattle that work in your environment and for your customers, be good stewards of the land, add value to your cattle and then capture that value.

You can visit www.bifconference.com for more highlights of the 2008 BIF Annual Research Symposium and Annual Meeting.

Congratulations award winners

Each year BIF recognizes folks who are leaders in the industry with various awards. I want to congratulate Duncan Porteous, past Canadian Hereford Association general manager, for receiving the Continuing Service Award. Duncan has been very instrumental in getting the Hereford breed started on a global evaluation. Also, Louis Latimer, Remitall Cattle Co., received the Pioneer Award. (For more about the BIF award winners, see "BIF meets in Calgary.")

Bloodtyping to discontinue

On a final topic, I would like to clear up some misconceptions about the announcement concerning bloodtyping cattle for parentage verification. After Jan. 1, 2009, bloodtyping will not be available. If you have a sire or embryo transfer (ET) donor dam that has been permitted through bloodtyping, progeny can still be registered. However, if some of their progeny needs to be permitted, it will need to be done using DNA.

So, if you have a sire that you are using that has been permitted, then you will need to get a straw of semen sent to Maxxam Analytics Inc. for a profile. This will allow you to sire permit any progeny. If you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to give us a call. **HW**

BIF meets in Calgary

Seedstock and commercial producers as well as animal scientists interested in beef improvement attended the 2008 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Research Symposium & Annual Meeting June 30-July 3 in Calgary.

The yearly event is usually held in the U.S. and is North America's leading forum to showcase and discuss genetic advancements and innovations in beef production. The 40th anniversary meeting included discussion about beef production innovations and advancements happening in the U.S. and Canada and shared opportunities for the two leading beef producing countries. More than 400 attendees participated from eight countries — Canada, U.S., Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

During the event, BIF presents its annual awards recognizing pioneers in beef improvement, those who have served BIF, and seedstock and commercial producers for their efforts in genetic improvement.

Latimer recognized

Canadian Hereford breeder Louis Latimer of Remitall Cattle Co. was honored with a Pioneer Award. The award recognizes individuals who have made lasting contributions to the improvement of beef cattle and who have had a major role in the acceptance of performance reporting and documentation as the primary means to make genetic change in beef cattle populations.

Louis was born Feb. 13, 1923, at the family farm east of Bowden, Alberta. He was the second son in a family of four boys and one girl. His grandfather and father brought a herd of Shorthorns to Canada from Missouri in 1903.

In 1945 he married Jean Winter, and they raised a family of six, two boys and four girls. There are now 21 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. In 1946 Louis and Jean purchased a section of land, and with a herd of four Shorthorn cows, the foundation of the famed Remitall Cattle Co. was formed.

In 1954 Louis and his brother Carroll formed a partnership that continued for 20 years. During this time the Shorthorn herd had some of the top sales in both Canada and the U.S. A polled Hereford herd was started in 1963.

In 1960 Louis decided it was time to branch out and added the John Deere agency in Olds to the operation as well as dealerships in Comminco fertilizer, Chrysler cars, Miracle Feeds, Butler Buildings, with top sales awards coming to Louis from John Deere and Comminco.

In 1976 the partnership with brother Carroll Latimer came to an end, and Carroll moved to California. Louis continued the cattle operation and the Remitall name at Olds, forming a partnership with his two sons Gary and Bryan Latimer — that still continues. Cattle continued to be the main business focus. Gelbvieh and Angus herds were added along the way with the Gelbvieh herd being dispersed in the mid-1990s; today the main herds of polled



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Herefords and Angus number more than 1,000 head each. Three grandsons — Michael, Richard and Jeff — are now involved in the operation.

The Remitall name and its bloodlines are known worldwide and have made great contributions to the cattle industry.

Canadian Hereford

Duncan Porteous was presented a BIF Continuing Service Award. The award recognizes individuals who have made a major contribution to BIF.

Porteous has enjoyed an extensive career of note with the Canadian Hereford Association (CHA); he is a well-known and respected individual in Canada's purebred beef cattle sector. From 1964 to 1966, he was assistant to the secretary-manager of the CHA and during this time focused on the organization of the junior program, dwarfism research and promotion of the breed. From 1967 to 1975, he was involved in a custom farming operation and in August of 1975 became general manager of the CHA.

Born in Regina in 1942, Duncan moved with the family from Carlyle, Saskatchewan, to Dog Pound, Alberta, in 1946. His father, Hume, was a prominent Hereford breeder in Alberta, who continued a herd that had been established by Duncan's great-grandfather in 1912. Raised in the Hereford breed, Duncan was very active in 4-H and in 1957, exhibited the grand champion steer in Calgary.

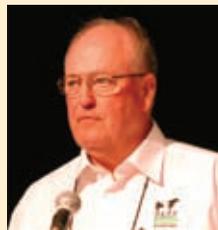
Duncan's first significant undertaking as CHA general manager was to organize and host the Seventh World Hereford Conference held in Banff and Calgary in July 1976. In 1978 he developed the framework for the National Junior Hereford Council and initiated the first junior national show in 1980 — Bonanza.

In 1981 the Total Herd Evaluation Program was established: the forerunner of complete cow herd reporting systems used by all major breed associations in Canada today and the first all-Hereford EPD analysis with the University of Guelph later in 1987.

Duncan has been a champion of breeder education and breed improvement. The first Hereford cattlemen's clinic was started in the early 80s, and Duncan has been a committed supporter of BIF as it leads the industry in the development of new genetic tools and standardization.

In 1993 Duncan initiated a partnership with the American Hereford and Polled Hereford Associations that resulted in combining the performance data in Canada and the U.S. into the North American Cattle Evaluation and the development of North American expected progeny differences (EPDs). He also initiated many Canadian Hereford research programs including ultrasound technology, maternal productivity, Hereford carcass evaluations, global EPD evaluations and net feed intake studies.

In 1988 Duncan was elected secretary-general of the World Hereford Council, which represents more than 20 Hereford associations and societies around the world.



Duncan Porteous

Commercial Hereford producer named top commercial producer

Kniebel Farms & Cattle Co., White City, Kan., was recognized with the BIF Commercial Producer of the Year Award. Kniebel Farms & Cattle Co. is owned and managed by Kevin and Mary Ann, Chuck and Kim, and Charles and Mona Kniebel and families.

2008 marks the 130th anniversary of Kniebel Farms & Cattle Co., a diversified family operation that has grown from a single homestead to encompass 7,000 acres of Flint Hills grass and farmland. The current operation consists of 500 spring-calving cows and 60 fall-calving cows. The family utilizes a three-breed rotation consisting of horned Hereford, Red Angus and Angus. All the calves are finished in the family-owned feedyard. They raise all their own feed and consider their operation truly "conception to consumption."

In 1996 the family joined U.S. Premium Beef (USPB), a progressive group of ranchers and feeders that purchased part of the National Beef packing plant. USPB pays for harvested cattle on a grid, which rewards the quality the Kniebels strive to produce.

The cattle that Kniebel Farms & Cattle Co. produces are thick, moderate, easy-keeping, pound-producing, higher-grading, Choice cattle. Through USPB the Kniebels collect carcass data and add that to their culling criteria. They believe in trying to have a well-rounded program and not to chase any one single trait or fad. They continue to find ways to increase efficiencies and are incorporating different grazing varieties and techniques to hold down costs.

The Kniebels tag, tattoo and maintain performance records. By maintaining genetic lines on their commercial cows, they are able to utilize artificial insemination (AI) on the heifers to optimize even more genetic progress. They keep the top-third of their heifers as replacements. Cow records, including calving and weaning performance, are kept on file, too, for both U.S. Department of Agriculture trace back audit and support in their production and business decisions. Keeping track of carcass performance, including pounds produced, helps in their culling decisions.

For more highlights of the conference, visit www.bifconference.com. For more information about BIF, visit www.beefimprovement.org. **HW**



Kniebel Farms and Cattle Co., White City, Kan., was recognized as the BIF Commercial Producer of the Year. Pictured accepting the award from Lora Rose, BIF president, is Mary Ann and Kevin Kniebel.