

Users Review Online Registry System

Earlier this year, the American Hereford Association (AHA) conducted a survey of online registry users to find out what system features need improvement, what features are the most useful and what items need to be considered being added to the system.

More than 1,300 surveys were sent out using an electronic survey service, and we received 405 responses for a 31% return rate. This is a very good cross-sectional sampling of our members.

The simple responses to the survey questions were quickly tabulated, but the comments that members provided for the various questions were quite

extensive and have taken many hours to categorize and summarize. We've spent hours studying those comments, which will prove very useful as we move forward making changes to the system.

In general, the membership can be divided into three very diverse classifications including:

Computer savvy/satisfied — About one-third of our members enjoy the program, think it is wonderful the way it is, saves them time and money, and really have only minor things they would change.

Computer savvy/needs improvement — About one-third of

our members are computer savvy and appreciate what the system can do for them but, for a variety of reasons, recommend upgrades that will make the system more user-friendly, with better instructions that would make it easier to navigate since they use it so infrequently.

Computer challenged and/or not satisfied — About 13% of members have a hard time with computers. They are confused and frustrated, do not like the Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program and, for that matter, do not like record keeping in general. Then there are about 20% of members who consider themselves at least somewhat computer savvy and are not satisfied with the online registry, primarily when submitting information.

Staff reviewed the details of comments from each of the comment questions. Although there were a vast number of positive comments, staff focused on those areas where recommended improvement was needed. The following are five key areas into which most of the issues can be categorized:

- 1) **Navigation** — About 50% of online users use the system fewer than five times a year and almost 90% use the system fewer than eight times a year. Therefore, the system navigation and the way to get around in the system could be made easier to follow and understand without constant relearning. A simplified data grid and menus may be developed that will help members move around in the system more easily in order to find those things they need in a much simpler fashion.
- 2) **User friendly** — This category involves several different areas including understanding batches or finding an alternative to batches, screen size or possible spreadsheet data entry, understanding what errors are and the easy way to correct errors, knowing when their work is complete, understanding the calendar of when things are due

or even simplifying the calendar, being able to see what was turned in and accepted, and becoming more confident in the system.

- 3) **System** — System areas are those areas that may have been overlooked, or may need program or system changes including: dealing with slow dial-up, issues such as twins, AI certificates, master accounts and multiple ownerships, transfers on entry, registry at weaning, etc. Many of these issues would ultimately make the system more user friendly as well.
- 4) **Information/communication** — Providing better communication through instructions, periodic communication, training, help desk, easier navigation, etc. An interesting fact from the survey was that 28% of members do not read or utilize the online help tools and tend to simply call the office for help. Fifteen percent do not seek help when they get into trouble. Reaching these users who don't seek help will be critical to more successful uptake.
- 5) **TPR** — Some of the difficulty that a few members are having is they do not understand our Whole Herd TPR system, its purpose or its value. Some do not understand seasons while others are frustrated with their own data entry errors. Ways to make reporting easier are being evaluated.

Staff has already begun to institute plans to address these key areas of concern, so be sure to look for additional updates on specific changes and enhancements in future *Hereford World* issues and *Hereford eNews*. Furthermore, results of this survey have been sent to ABRI in Australia so that the programming experts will have an opportunity to digest the issues and propose additional improvements. **HW**

Software package options

One option members with larger herds or with both purebred and commercial herds might want to consider is utilizing on-farm herd management software packages. Some of these packages provide members the ability to track much more information than what is typically submitted to the American Hereford Association (AHA), and this information can aid them in their accounting, taxes, compliance with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) audited programs, etc. and at the same time allow them to interface with the AHA to some extent.

Here are a few of the options available and the extent to which they currently interface with AHA's registry system. You can use the contact information provided below to learn more about each system and pricing.

GEM (Genetic & Economic Management)

Benyshek & Hough Consulting Services
www.benyshek-hough.com • (770) 586-0432

- Upload initial herd data files to get user started (software provider)
- Submit registrations to AHA (user)
- Submit weaning and yearling data (user)
- Upload calf crop and herd expected progeny difference (EPD) updates (user)

CattleMax

Cattle Soft Inc.
www.CattleMax.com • (877) 454-COWS

- Upload initial herd data files to get user started (software provider)
- Submit registrations to AHA (user)
- Upload calf crop and herd EPD updates (software provider)

CowSense

Midwest Microsystems LLC
www.midwestmicro.com • (402) 323-6969

- Upload initial herd data files to get user started (software provider)
- Submit registrations to AHA (user)
- Submit weaning and yearling data (user)
- Upload calf crop and herd EPD updates (user)

CattlePro

Bowman Farm Systems, Inc.
www.cattlepro.com • (800) 204-2002

- Upload initial herd data files to get user started (software provider)
- Submit registrations to AHA (user, has only been tested on a limited basis at this time)

HerdMaster

Saltbush Software
http://saltbush.une.edu.au/en-au/products/herdmaster/HMS
sales@saltbush.une.edu.au

- Upload initial herd data files to get user started (user)
- Submit registrations to AHA (user)
- Submit weaning and yearling data (user)
- Submit inventory updates (user)
- Upload calf-crop and herd EPD updates (user)

Note: Some users have experienced difficulty with customer service due to this company being located outside the U.S. HW