



Hereford Seedstock Breeders' Excellence Honored

Being a great seedstock producer is serious business. It goes way past the passion and entertainment value that a serious hobby provides. It sometimes goes against the grain of traditional thinking. The great breeders just think a little differently. They look past habits and personal preferences. They are outside the box, outside the norm and not about to follow trends without careful discernment. They make trends.

Successful seedstock producers are disciplined. The great ones are relentless and ruthless in what gets to stay and what must go. It is a cruel fact that they have no remorse for the culled, no emotion for the subpar. They understand that God put man in charge of cows and not the other way around.

They have learned the hard way through one bad experience after another. They have been honed in the fire of their own mistakes. They are watchful of other's blunders, and because of this awareness, they have great confidence in their beliefs, knowledge and understanding of the industry that they cherish.

They are like the John Deere dealer for their customer, and with that comes a weighty responsibility. Their customers rely totally on the honesty, the integrity and the promise that the product represented will perform according to claims with reasonable accuracy.

Cattlemen go to the bank based on what they know of the genetics they purchase from their favorite breeder. The relationship is cemented when the promise is fulfilled.

Successful seedstock producers are scientists. They push their breed associations to dig deeper and to identify that which works, that which makes their product better, that which gets them to their goals quicker, that which returns to them money far and away above costs. They study. They crunch numbers and scan the breed, the pedigrees, the cow families in an effort to paint a visual picture of what the invisible twisted double-helix can miraculously produce.

They are humbled. Being a breeder is wrought with warranties. There is extreme pressure involved in knowing that the decisions they make each and every day must come with certain guarantees.

The registration paper today reads like the window sticker on a new Cadillac on the showroom floor. It provides consumer information based on trusted honesty and integrity, using the best information available — information that they measured and turned in with care. The consumer protection plan is in place. Product liability is a reality. Every decision is an investment, a bet based on collective knowledge and not just a gut hunch.

The Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) — a group of innovative commercial producers, seedstock producers, academics, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientists, breed association representatives and genetic companies — meets each year to discuss cutting-edge technology and how to incorporate technology into the trade in order to impact profitability for the entire industry.

Each year, BIF recognizes a seedstock producer who exemplifies the qualities of a great leader committed to the industry and committed to innovation. For the last two years, the breeders recognized have been Hereford breeders.

This year's BIF Seedstock Producer of the Year is Sandhill Farms, owned and operated by Kevin and Vera Schultz. The 2009 BIF Seedstock Producer of the Year was Harrell Hereford Ranch, owned and operated by Bob Harrell and family. The American Hereford Association is thrilled that these two great breeders have received such deserving accolades.

There is a certain significance in the fact that two Hereford breeders have, in back-to-back years, won the coveted BIF Seedstock Producer of the Year award. Not since Knoll Crest Farms in 1998 has a Hereford breeder been recognized with this award previous to the Harrells. Not only is having been chosen for this award a testament to

the two breeders' commitment to their industry, but it is also a testament to the Hereford breed's commitment to delivering a value to the commercial industry that cannot be ignored.

The commitment of these two young and aggressive Hereford breeders, Bob Harrell and Kevin Schultz, is a reflection of what is going on in the Hereford breed today. There is a pride in our business that is just as strong as the pride John Deere puts into its "Green and Gold" image.

To survive as a seedstock producer, it takes pride — pride of ownership, pride in family, pride in progress, and pride in your brand. The decision to become the type of seedstock breeder that warrants such accolades is a commitment that many breeders among all breeds of cattle have a difficult time stomaching.

The study of genetics, management, data analysis and relentless phenotypic scrutiny, while sustaining the family resource, bring about the type of discipline that only the best manufacturers in the world can brag about. It's the stuff that JD Powers corporate award winners are made of.

Congratulations to the Schultz family for this year's significant recognition. We are all proud of you for your commitment and your accomplishment. See Page 32 for more information about this year's BIF conference. **HW**