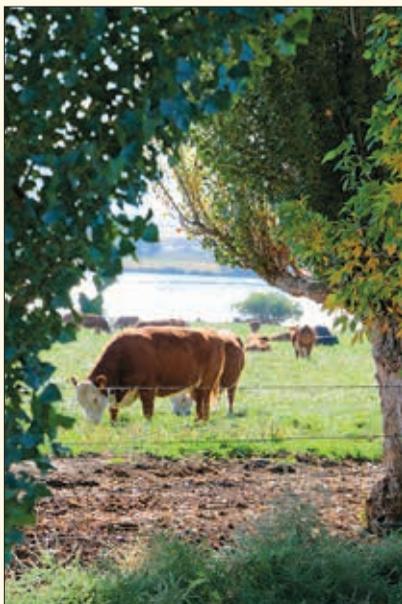


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# HEREFORD WORLD

Published by the American Hereford Association

August 2016; Vol. 107, No. 3

## Fierce Foothold

*Black baldie females add pounds to Mulcock Ranch's New Mexico cow herd.*

by Julie Mais

In the semiarid foothills of southeastern New Mexico, a prime spring-fed trout stream, the Rio Penasco, winds through a meadow. Beyond the lowlands, the landscape takes on a different look — one that is dry, rough and rocky. The cattle that roam the hills thrive, as do the fish in the water and the wildlife in the meadow.

Mulcock Ranch, Mayhill, N.M., has resided on this diverse piece of the country for 114 years, and has run Hereford cattle for many decades.

Charlie Mulcock, who oversees the 8,000-acre homestead in addition to a number of leased acres today, says his grandparents moved to New Mexico from northeastern Louisiana in the early 1900s.

Though the region receives only 16 inches of rainfall a year, Mulcock says his 550-head cow herd, consisting of black baldies and black females, has to be able to survive the terrain. “There are some flat places, but there is on average a 45-degree slope,” he says. “And, it’s rocky. A cow can hardly take a step without stepping on a rock.”

The 200 acres of tillable ground is used for pasture and making hay to maintain the herd. “We have the opportunity to take a little bit better care of our cattle on the irrigated ground than on the lease place,” he says. “We use it as a nursery. We calve our two-year-old heifers there and we leave them there until they have calved a second time. We’ll keep them there through their second calf until she is basically three years old. We can help them nutritionally, grow them out, mature them and then move them out to the rough lease country.”

Mulcock says the ranch implemented an extensive artificial insemination (AI)



Mulcock Ranch, Mayhill, N.M., uses Hereford bulls like this one to add heterosis to his herd.

program in which he breeds all virgin heifers to black bulls. The heifers are then sent to graze on the native grass along with Hereford bulls purchased from Pérez Cattle Co. in Nara Visa, N.M. The ranch retains heifer calves to later sell as bred heifers. “Because we keep

our heifers we end up with a lot of black baldie cows,” he says.

### The baldie benefit

Mulcock attended New Mexico State University and graduated in 1970.

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Charlie Mulcock says there is great acceptability of black baldies in the market place.

About that time, he says, cattlemen were starting to hear about the effects of heterosis. “They were coming out with studies on heterosis advantage,” he says, and since implementing crossbreeding, he has been reaping benefits.

“I suspect we get a 13% boost with crossbred cattle. I get a 13% pay raise and it doesn’t really cost me anything. There is great acceptability of black baldies in the market place. It’s not hard to get on the phone and say ‘I’ve got some black baldies,’ and, boy, customers are pretty easy to please when you’ve got something like that.”

Mulcock appreciates the maternal strengths of black baldie females. “Our calves that are raised by black baldie mamas outweigh the ones from straight

black,” he says. “Those black baldie mamas do a better job of raising calves than the black cows in our country. That crossbred mama is a better mama.”

#### Acclimating with ease

The Hereford bulls on Mulcock Ranch spend some time acclimating to the location and environment. Yearling bulls are purchased each year and then brought home to spend time growing accustomed to the semiarid climate before being turned out with the females. “We try to make them walk on those rocks so on the second year those bulls are pretty well acclimated,” he says. “They’ll go and do a good job. They’ll adapt alright.”

When purchasing bulls for his herd, Mulcock says calving

ease and low birth weight are priority, even when those bulls are intended for mature cows. “I don’t want anything that’s not going to be easy calving,” he says. “The majority of our calving is unassisted. It can be awful cold in February when we’re calving. If that cow cannot lie down, calve that calf and get up in single digits, we’re going to lose some calves. We need a small birth weight calf to get started with.”

Next on the list of selection criteria is performance. “We also look at weaning weight and yearling weight,” Mulcock says. “For a long while it seemed those were mutually exclusive, but the purebred Hereford breeders have done a remarkable job in getting the, commonly termed, ‘spread bull’ where you have low birth weight and high productivity. I look at those numbers. The numbers prevail.”

Mulcock adds, “When it’s all said and done, you always weigh those calves before you sell them and you get paid on the weight. Having nice calves that are structurally correct sure is important, but still the ultimate deal is you run them across the scales.”

#### Hereford’s progressive move

Mulcock commended the Hereford breed for providing more technologies for cattlemen today. “We have access to

expected progeny differences (EPDs) and genomic information. Those EPDs and that database works for all of us, commercial or seedstock.”

He also suggests that top-notch genetics will prevail in the current market. “I really believe, especially two years ago when cattle were as high as they were, anything that would walk on the truck would bring a ton of money,” he explains. “Obviously this market is off, but I expect good cattle, good producing cattle and good performing cattle are going to bring even more of a premium now in an off market than what they would in a thriving market.”

Mulcock believes a successful cattle operation grounded in good genetics. “I’m not planning on cutting back on the quality of the bulls I use just to save money,” he says. “I’ve watched people step over dollars to pick up dimes for a long time. I never understood that. When people are buying bulls, their genetic program, that’s when you see people trying to cut corners. It can come back to haunt them.”

He adds, “I think there are some inferior cattle out there that will be hard-pressed to find a home. The importance of good cattle and good genetics is very important.” **HW**



Charlie Mulcock says his Hereford bulls and Hereford-cross cattle manage well in this semiarid climate.