

We Must Not Run Low on Leaders



Craig Huffhines

Never before has our industry needed passionate leadership more than today. Recently our own National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the Cattlemen's Beef Board, the gatekeeper of the U.S. beef checkoff, got crossways with one another over control of beef checkoff expenditures.

At the core of the matter were egos, accountability, power struggles and issues with trust. Cooler heads prevailed at the summer board meeting after long hours of work, debate, discussion and passionate dialog that eventually worked toward plans to better satisfy the management of checkoff funds.

As a beef industry loyalist, I am hopeful that this painstaking process has led the industry to middle ground where trust can be established. We certainly do not need to be a threat to ourselves while external pressures of environmental legislative chaos, government control of markets, unfair export trade agreements and

uninformed, illogically-born local movements continue to threaten our way of life — a way of life that has guaranteed the American public the safest, cheapest and most wholesome food supply on the planet.

Whatever needs to occur needs to occur quickly, because it is my opinion that the \$1-per-animal beef checkoff is vastly under funding the needs of the industry.

Couldn't we spend that energy more wisely telling the story of the American beef producer and the way we conduct business with care for the environment and integrity in animal care? Couldn't we spend more time endorsing a \$2- to \$3-per-head checkoff that gives us the necessary resources to properly promote beef, to conduct research on product development, food safety and quality, and to further open up the growing demand for high-quality U.S. beef around the world?

We are not going to be an industry that can compete with Brazil's vast numbers of low-cost, low-quality, grass-fed beef at a price point that will sustain our industry. We cannot compete, nor do we want to compete, with our friends from Australia and their \$50 per hundredweight (cwt.) grass-fed breakevens.

We must rely on our unique ability to produce quality at an added value. An under-funded checkoff is a surefire way of conceding our competitive

advantage and giving up on our unique ability to appeal to the palates of a growing affluency in parts of the world.

Young leaders are not born; they are made

As mentioned before, our industry is hungry for passionate leadership. Our own American Hereford Association (AHA) has been blessed with terrific people willing to step up and participate at the national board level, but now, more than ever, AHA needs more interest from our membership to take on the commitment.

Running for an office is not easy. More than a few state leaders within the Hereford breed have stepped up, have put their reputations on the line to run for the Board, and then have been narrowly defeated in the election. Some have refused to put themselves through that challenging process again.

I can understand their dilemma, but I also want to make the point that getting beat in an election does not define us. Giving of ourselves for a greater good does. Participating on a national board is not a "cup of tea," but it is a worthy cause.

Because of the groundwork the AHA Board has laid in the last decade, we now are beginning to enjoy the fruits of good direction and decision making. Our seedstock product is growing in demand at a

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Five candidates vying for AHA Board

Nominating Committee Chairman Lee Haygood has submitted five candidates for election to the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board this fall including:

- Tom Boatman, Georgia
- Keith Fawcett, South Dakota
- Richard Gebhardt, Oklahoma
- Steve Lambert, California
- Dale Venhuizen, Montana

You can look for these men's biographies in the October *Hereford World*. All of them are worthy leaders in their own right. **HW**

pace that will be challenging to keep up. It is just as important to have strong leadership during good times as it is during tough times.

During the tough times, decisions may have been easier. We had very basic things that the breed and the Association needed catching up on. Today, we need innovative thinkers to help us to keep the boiler in the engine room stoked.

Leadership begins with appreciation at a young age

The Junior National Hereford Expo in Indianapolis has proved to be a development ground for our future young leaders. In those nearly 650 young exhibitors, I could see farmers, ranchers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, mayors, store clerks, and full-time

and part-time Hereford breeders all participating in their passion.

I'm sure there are many Hereford breeders who will receive this issue and question the amount of work and coverage that we as an organization put into our youth program. If you are a beef industry loyalist like I am and you have been worried about the ongoing debate and negative energy that has tied up immense time of our beef industry leaders, then you should have an even greater appreciation that the American Hereford Association has one of the strongest youth leadership development programs in the nation, if not the world.

The 1,161 head of cattle shown and the 22 contests honing these young people's professional skills and

character are invaluable to the future of our business.

I am personally grateful for and proud of our Indiana hosts and the work that people like Hereford breeder and banker Bruce Everhardt; AHA Junior Director Amy Cowan; AHA intern Corey Duysen; my own right arm in the office, Mary Ellen Hummel; the records department staff lead by Cindy Coleman; and the behind-the-scenes AHA employees and volunteers who made it happen.

It is also a blessing that our corporate sponsors VitaFerm® and John Deere, along with countless Hereford breeders around the country, see the value of our youth program and give graciously to the cause. Thank you to all of you and for your commitment to our future. **HW**