

Collective Efforts Reap Success

Hereford breeders share their perspectives about the Certified Hereford Beef program.

by Susan Hayhurst

While the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) program has been around since 1995, Hereford producers are discovering one of the best ways to embrace CHB is through personally promoting its merits.

Scott Lawrence, a Hereford breeder from Avilla, Ind., promotes CHB® product through a local grocery chain and on a billboard.

"We've made it a point to educate Miller's Super Valu, a local grocery chain, about Hereford beef, and they promote it in their meat case. Their clients like the product," Lawrence says.



"The premiums are an incentive to compete with other breeds and demonstrate we have consistency in Herefords."

— Scott Lawrence

The American Hereford Association (AHA) established CHB to offer the food industry truly superior beef products and to enhance the demand for Hereford cattle.

Enhancing the demand is mirrored in another successful CHB promotional avenue for Midwestern producers, the Midwest Certified Hereford Beef Feeder Calf Sale at Carthage, Ill. Established in 2006 with guidance from Jim Williams, CHB LLC vice



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— Bill Dunn

president of supply, the sale is coordinated by five state Hereford associations, including Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Wisconsin. The first sale was Dec. 6, 2007, and was deemed a success with more than 600 head of age-, source- and health-verified Herefords and Hereford-influenced cattle netting \$20,000 in premiums for 34 consignors.

Bill Dunn, a Hereford breeder and sale committee member from Cochran, Pa., says the sale is a great marketing tool for Hereford breeders. "I was thrilled when John Meents asked me to be a part of the sale committee. I'm a tremendous advocate for the sale, and its conception came at a good time when things were starting to get scary for the beef industry. The Carthage sale is a great opportunity to offer good calves together in a uniform group, and Jim Williams finds just the right customers.

"Herefords are a good product but have traditionally lagged behind in marketing efforts," Dunn adds. "As breeders we need to take advantage of every good marketing tool, and the sale is a great tool, especially for smaller breeders who want to participate

and are looking for such a viable venue and premiums. The only place Angus breeders are beating us is in marketing, and I believe events such as this sale go a long way in growing our marketing."



Mark Stephens

Mark Stephens, a Hereford breeder and sale committee member from Edinburg, Ill., agrees premiums offered at sales like the one in Carthage are an incentive to participate. "The feeder calf sale offers home-raised cattle

with decent premium per head over local markets," he says. "In the 2007 sale, cattle sold with a \$20/head premium over the local market. With last year's success, we expect 1,000 head this year. The sale is a good opportunity to sell age- and source-verified cattle that have excellent quality. Producers need to know they can take anywhere from 10 to 100 feeders. The sale was launched to market Hereford feeder cattle. It's doing just that and is a great marketing tool for producers and the Hereford breed."

This year's sale is scheduled for Dec. 4, 2008. For more

information on the sale, contact AHA field representative John Meents at (419) 306-7480 or Jim Williams at (308) 222-0170.

While the Hereford industry and producers are netting visibility and financial gain through the CHB program, much is left to be accomplished according to other Hereford breeders.

Truman Whaley, a breeder from Dalton, Ga., agrees the program has tremendous potential but wants to see more centralized shipping locales created to get cattle to market.



Truman Whaley

"Living in Georgia, which basically is cut geographically into north, middle and south sections, makes it difficult to get cattle onto truckloads because of distance," Whaley says. "We need more collection points developed such as three locations for the three sections of our state."

Stephens agrees that while the efficiency and quality of Herefords is top notch, more needs to be done to organize truckloads to get cattle to licensed CHB packing plants. "In Illinois we're seeing some new packing houses, but it's tricky trying to get cattle to certified packing houses in an organized and timely manner. The Carthage sale is an example of producers working together. We need to work together more in getting cattle where they need to go."

Travis Meterer, Blue Mound, Ill., says progress is being made in promoting the CHB program but more needs to be done to capture the consumer market and make the program accessible for producers. "I believe progress is being made for CHB, but it's not as visible as we Hereford producers would like. Not a whole lot of retailers carry CHB. We know people will always pay for quality beef with good color, even with the way the economy is. They also want more uniformity and an assurance of the product's safety."



Travis Meterer

Name recognition plays a significant part in the success of the CHB program, according to Meterer. "We are playing catch up to the Angus breed. They have name recognition and CHB doesn't yet. We can though if we work diligently and collectively as Hereford producers and industry representatives."

CHB LLC continues to grow as a branded beef program. Hereford breeders can help continue the program's growth by helping to promote CHB to neighbors, local retailers, restaurant owners and chefs. Working together, Hereford breeders, CHB LLC staff, and CHB retailers and distributors can make CHB a top choice at America's dinner table. **HW**

Commonly asked questions

What are the live animal specifications for Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®)?

- Cattle must have a predominately (51%) whiteface and exhibit white markings over the jaw, forehead and muzzle. White markings on any part of the hip or shoulder or side of the body such as spots, stripes or belts are not acceptable.
- Acceptable cattle are offered for qualification except those other than solid red, solid black or roan with a predominately whiteface, such as yellow, gray, brown, brindle or smoke, which are ineligible.
- Only steers and heifers of English-beef type breeding under 30 months of age qualify; an animal expressing dairy or Bos Indicus type breeding is not acceptable.
- To qualify, cattle may be either horned or polled. Bulls, bullocks or cows are not acceptable.



What are the CHB carcass specifications?

- Slight 00 to moderate 99 marbling score.
- Yield grade 4 and leaner.
- 600–1,000 lb. carcass weight.
- No dark cutters.
- A maturity only.

Who determines CHB eligibility?

All eligible cattle and carcasses are certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at program-approved harvest facilities. Live animals are evaluated to confirm CHB visual specifications for hide color and other indicators. USDA graders individually certify each carcass. Both live animal and carcass specifications are determined by CHB LLC and posted to the USDA Web site, USDA.gov.

For more information about the CHB program, visit the CHB Web site, HerefordBeef.net. **HW**

