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Retiring AHA President Bill King, Stanley, N.M., serves as an ambassador for the Hereford breed and the beef industry.

Hereford Strengths Increase Profitability

Today's Hereford can help commercial cattlemen improve fertility, feed efficiency and cutability.

by Angie Stump Denton

Hereford breeders today are focused on producing a product that is useful to the commercial producer, feeder and packer. "Our members are striving to raise cattle that can thrive on the resources available to them and that will sire offspring that are profitable in all segments of the industry," says Bill King, a Hereford breeder from Stanley, N.M., and

president of the American Hereford Association (AHA).

"Modern day Herefords are a result of our members focusing on the things our customers were demanding," he explains. "We are producing the genetics that will do all things a commercial producer needs, including hybrid vigor when crossed on black cows, increased fertility and improved feed efficiency."

Bill is owner of King Herefords, which is a 300-plus head registered Hereford cow-calf ranch. He also manages 1,000-plus commercial cows, 350 registered Angus and Charolais cows, a 2,000-head stocker operation, and a 6,000-head feedlot. In addition, the ranch includes 4,000 acres of irrigated land.

"Bill is an ambassador for the entire beef industry," says Jack Ward, AHA chief operating officer and director of breed improvement. "With both a seedstock and commercial cow herd as well as a cattle feeding operation, he understands the challenges and opportunities in all segments of the beef industry."

During Bill's tenure on the AHA Board, the Association has devoted time and finances to document the value of heterosis in real-world commercial settings.

"As a Board we have demonstrated our emphasis on improving and documenting feed efficiency and economic qualities with projects like Harris Ranch, Circle A and Amana," Bill says. "Those projects have given us real data to prove the Hereford advantage."

Bill credits AHA's Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program for helping breeders become more accountable and knowledgeable about their genetics. "With the data available, thanks to TPR, we are able to supply commercial producers cattle that will do well for them."

Along with being the efficiency experts, Bill says a real strength of the Hereford breed is the fertility and mothering ability of the Hereford female. "As the Circle A and Harris Ranch data proved, the Hereford-sired female has a 7% advantage in conception rate and, according to Vern Pierce from the University of Missouri, a net income of \$51 more per cow per year," Bill says. "Those are real numbers that I can use when I sell bulls, and they make a difference."

Cattleman by birth

Growing up, Bill enjoyed helping his dad and uncles with their King Bros. Ranch, which included cow-calf, stocker and feeding operations.

In 1968, when Bill was a junior in high school, he purchased three

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Hereford heifers that were the start of the family's registered herd.

Through the years, the registered herd grew with the main function of producing bulls for the family's commercial herd. In the early 80s, Bill started offering bulls private treaty and continues to do so today.

"The focus of our registered program has always been to raise cattle that are good for the commercial man. Cattle that will

do good on grass, in the feedlot and all the way through the program," Bill says.

Bill has passed on his love for the beef industry to his three daughters — Becky Spindle, Jenny Caldes and Stacy King. All three girls were active in the junior Hereford program, with Becky serving on the National Junior Hereford Association board.

"The best part of the junior program is that it is a family

project," Bill says. "In today's fast-paced world, there's not a lot of time for family. It's something we still value, the together time as a family."

Today Becky and her husband, Tom, help manage the ranch and take care of the registered cattle. The next generation of Kings participated in the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Tulsa this summer. Becky's daughter, Jordan Spindle, enjoyed her first JNHE. Bill has four other grandkids who will likely follow in Jordan's footsteps someday.

A family of leaders

"Bill knows what is happening in all aspects of the industry, and he has brought a calming leadership presence to the AHA Board that has instilled confidence in all of us who have had a chance to work with him," says Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president. "His experience has brought a sound industry business sense to the AHA Board."

Huffhines explains Bill comes from a family devoted to public service, which has really contributed to Bill's natural-born leadership skills. Bill's dad, Bruce, was a three-time New Mexico governor. Bruce was first elected in 1970, then re-elected in 1978 and 1990. Bill's brother, Gary, is currently serving as the New Mexico attorney general.

"Bill is a true industry leader, serving not only on the national scale but in his home state, where he has been instrumental in leading the New Mexico Cattle Growers and brand

board for many years, protecting the rights of fellow cattlemen and farmers," Huffhines says.

As a Board member

"As a board member and president, Bill has been a real asset to the Hereford breed," says Ward. "He supports all entities of the Association while being fiscally responsible. He is always positive and brings a wealth of knowledge to the position. I have personally enjoyed the no-nonsense approach that he has brought to the Board."

While on the Board, King has served on numerous committees and chaired the finance committee.

"During the last four years, Bill has been instrumental in navigating our policy and research efforts that were critical in protecting the integrity of the breed and our organization as well as creating top of mind industry awareness of the economic benefits of the Hereford breed used in crossbreeding systems," Huffhines says. "I think that we will look back someday on the tenure that Bill King and his fellow board members served as a period of time when the Hereford breed really began to turn the corner on commercial demand. It's been a real privilege for me to work with the caliber of a man as Bill."

Bill says his recipe for continued success for AHA and the Hereford breed is to continue the progress made in the last four to five years in creating commercial industry demand for Hereford genetics. He also says it is important to continue to allow the junior program to grow and prosper, as it is the premier junior program in the country. **HW**



Family time is very important to the Kings. Pictured here is Bill's parents along with his daughters, son-in-laws and grandkids (l to r): Tom Spindle; Alice King (Bill's mom who passed this spring); Jenny and Lincoln Caldes; Abbie, Jordan, Cash, Stacy and Charli Spindle; Bruce King (Bill's dad); Stacy King and Josh Caldes.

During his tenure on the AHA Board, Bill King was instrumental in navigating AHA policy and research efforts that were critical in protecting breed integrity as well as creating top-of-mind industry awareness of the economic benefits of using Hereford in crossbreeding systems.



Q&A with AHA President Bill King

Before he retires from the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board Nov. 3, Bill King answers some questions about his tenure on the Board and the future of the Hereford breed and AHA.

Q: In April 2005 AHA developed a strategic plan; as a Board and staff, how have we worked to accomplish those strategies?

A: Profitability is what drives the commercial cow-calf and feeding industries. During the last five years, the Board has focused on proving the profitability of Hereford genetics in crossbreeding systems, which was a priority in the strategic plan.

With the data the AHA is collecting from research projects such as the Harris Ranch heterosis project and the feed efficiency trials at the University of Missouri and Circle A Ranch, the Association is documenting the Hereford advantage and then is using that data to promote the breed and raise awareness in the commercial industry about the value of Hereford. The dollars AHA spends on research, promotion and advertising are working to increase the demand for Hereford genetics and, thus, increase profits for AHA members like myself.

Since the strategic planning session, we have seen an increased demand for Hereford bulls and a change in commercial perception about Hereford cattle. I think the time is right to review the plan and update the Association's initiatives for 2010 and beyond.

Our next challenge is genomics and how the Hereford breed utilizes this new technology.

Q: How would you summarize the last 12 months?

A: The economy has been the biggest challenge the last 12 months for all Americans, not just cattle producers. I'm proud that as an Association, we have held our own under the current economic climate. This fiscal year we experienced an increase in registrations and membership, from the reports I hear, I think we'll be the only breed that can report an increase this year, which is very exciting and a real feather in our hat.

As a Hereford breed we can celebrate some key events this year, including the release of the Circle A Ranch heterosis project data, the media event we hosted in April and the release of the first Pan-American Cattle Evaluation this summer. It is an exciting time to be in the Hereford business.

Q: What do we need to do to continue the increased demand for Hereford genetics?

A: If we are going to continue to survive as a breed, we need to focus on delivering a product that will be useful to the commercial producer, feeder and packer. As their needs change, we need to change to meet those needs so our breed can continue to prosper.

We must continue to produce cattle that are efficient and able to survive on the resources commercial ranches have to work with. Our focus needs to be to offer genetics that will bring the commercial producer profits.

We must service our customers. This industry is churning so fast, and we don't want to end up like the Duroc hog. We want to be part of the final mix and be useful to the success of the beef industry.

We have a lot of bright young people in our industry, and they will continue to lead us in the right direction. **HW**