



Bill Cox

Living His Dream

Retiring AHA director and CHB LLC president is passionate about Herefords, Hereford beef and farming.

by Angie Stump Denton

Earlier this year Bill Cox attended his 40th high school class reunion. During the event, classmates shared what they have been doing since graduation. “I told everyone I’ve been lucky,” Cox says with a smile. “I’ve got to live my childhood dream — raising cattle and wheat.”

While in high school, Cox was an FFA member for four years. During that time, he had a chance to show steers, grow wheat and own a few commercial cattle. “That opportunity made me develop a love for farming and ranching, and because of it, I had a strong desire to farm and ranch for the rest of my life,” he says.

Today, Bill and his wife, Terrilie, own CX Ranch near Pomeroy, Wash. The couple

raises registered and commercial Herefords as well as wheat and barley. The ranch, located south of the Snake River, includes some steep, hilly land. The cattle utilize the land not suitable for farming as well as the wheat and barley stubble for fall and winter grazing to help stretch the pastureland.

In the Hereford business for 30 years, Cox purchased his first registered heifers in 1978 after getting his first farm lease. “It had a little pastureland and I wanted a few cows to utilize the land,” Cox recalls. He says he chose Herefords because when he was growing up, Herefords were king.

Cox says he enjoys the challenge of working to breed better genetics for his customers. “My goal is to have a cow herd that is competitive,” he says. “I’m always shooting to produce the

most productive female. I believe if you have good females you will raise good bulls.”

At one time Cox marketed cattle through several consignment sales, but today he mostly markets bulls private treaty. He sells about 20 bulls each year. The Coxes also sell steers on the rail to local buyers.

“I think the most important thing we can do today as Hereford breeders is continue to make our cattle better,” Cox says. “We need to be very diligent culling cattle that are not functional. We need to work to produce problem-free cattle. While maintaining Hereford maternal strengths, we need to continue as hard as we can to select for carcass traits.

“We need to be tougher than ever with the knife,” he adds. “We have to provide

Q&A with Bill Cox

Before retiring from the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board, Bill Cox answered some questions regarding his thoughts about the breed, the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) program and the future of both.

Q What is the biggest issue facing Hereford breeders today?

A The last 12 months have been as challenging as ever in our business because of the rest of the world and the economy — input costs of feed, fertilizer and fuel.

As Hereford breeders and as a board of leaders, we have to work to make our cattle relevant for the beef industry. We can do this by proving Herefords will improve the industry from pasture to plate.

Our beef improvement committee, with Jack Ward and Lee Haygood as leaders, has done a phenomenal job getting our genetics into real-world comparisons. We have been tracking the calves to

harvest and the females through calving. The Harris, Amana and Circle A tests are all extremely important and will create more value for our breed. This, in coordination with the CHB program, will do more to make our breed relevant and a needed part of the industry than anything else we’ve done.

We have grown so much in understanding and adapting to the needs of the cattlemen. We are gradually making believers in more and more people — packers, feeders, commercial cattlemen. And that is what we have to do if we want to continue to increase market share.

Q Your tenure on the CHB board has come at a challenging time for the brand. What are your thoughts about the future?

A I believe the CHB program is going to be extremely successful — beyond expectations. We have a good product and darn good people

commercial customers good quality, problem-free Herefords, or it just might be our last chance to prove ourselves.”

A true leader

Cox was elected to the American Hereford Association (AHA) Board in 2004, a job he has not taken lightly. Other AHA Board members and staff compliment Cox for his honesty, integrity and common-sense approach while serving on the Board.

“I really appreciate Bill Cox and his wise counsel, immediate availability whenever needed and his humble, straightforward approach to each challenge we’ve encountered during his tenure,” says Arden Gremmert,



Bill Cox, CHB LLC president and AHA Board member, gave an update on CHB LLC to nine media professionals representing 27 publications during the AHA media fly-in event Sept. 25, 2007.

“The CHB program helps prove a whiteface adds value for the commercial cattleman.”

Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC interim general manager. “As a staff, we’ve greatly benefited from his experience in the cattle industry and his expertise in business planning and

successful plan implementation.”

While on the AHA Board, Cox served on the breed improvement committee four

years and finance committee one year. He was a member of the CHB LLC board four years, and the last two years he has served as CHB LLC president.

“Bill Cox has been the leader and motivator of our Certified Hereford Beef team,” says Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president. “Bill instantly brought credibility to the program when he was appointed to the CHB LLC board. During some trying times, Bill has been able to communicate the strategy of the CHB business to our members and to the industry as well as it could be done.”

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promoting the brand. I think as an Association program, CHB is our best option to increase the demand for Hereford and Hereford-influenced cattle.

I understand people in the West and East don’t often see the benefit on a daily basis because they are farther away from feedlots feeding cattle and packing plants harvesting the cattle, but the fact is the more we drive demand for whiteface cattle in the packing plant the more it drives demand for Hereford genetics across the country.

I think we will drive our program through carcass utilization. With the rollout and growth of Nuestro Rancho, not only will we sell more of the carcass but it will allow us to build the middle meat program as it pulls more carcasses to the program in order to fill Nuestro Rancho demand.

I believe just like the vast number of Angus cows are an opportunity for our Hereford bulls so are the

Hispanic and Asian markets for our Hereford beef — that is what is going to drive our success.

Q Serving on the CHB board has given you a chance to visit with customers about the product. What have you learned about customer satisfaction with the product?

A In conversations with CHB retail and foodservice customers, I have heard that CHB is appreciated by customers because of its consistency — a quality eating experience time after time. What CHB brings to the supermarket and restaurant is the same thing we (Hereford breeders) bring to commercial cattlemen — a consistent, efficient, easy-to-handle product. **HW**



Cox family members (pictured front row, l to r) are: Autumn Lewis, Jillian Herres, Averi Lewis and Cooper Cox. Middle row (seated, l to r) are: Bill, Terrilie and Nikki Cox. Back row (standing, l to r) are: Jim and Andria Lewis, Josh Cox, Nick, Piper and Kyzer Herres.

Cox says the top priority in the Association's strategic plan, which was initiated in 2005, is growing the CHB Program. "Obviously we have put a lot of time the last year and a half trying to build a better business plan for CHB LLC," Cox says. "We are creating new strategies to increase carcass utilization and CHB sales."

This summer CHB LLC launched a new brand, *Nuestro Rancho*[™], which is targeting Hispanic shoppers. Currently offered in 31 Hispanic grocery stores throughout the Los Angeles area, shoppers now have the opportunity to buy Hereford beef cut the way they like it from a service case.

"Nuestro Rancho is giving us a tremendous opportunity," Cox says. "It allows us to increase carcass utilization. Research showed Hispanics purchase three to four times as much beef as other consumers, and most

of the beef they purchase is underutilized cuts from the chuck and round. So it adds real value to our program."

Cox says another focus has been on foodservice. In fiscal year 2008, CHB foodservice sales were 4.4 million lb., an increase from 2.9 million lb. last year.

While on the Board, Cox says one of his priorities was to represent the membership and make sure the members' voice was heard at the board table. Jack Ward, AHA chief operating officer and director of breed improvement, says that was one of Cox's strengths as a leader. "Bill brought a good common sense approach to serving on the Board and always shared ideas from the membership. His grassroots approach to breed improvement is very refreshing," Ward adds.

Although farming and ranching are more than a full-time job for Cox, he has

found time to serve industry organizations like the AHA. Cox is also a director and past president of the Oregon, Washington, Northern Idaho (OWNI) Hereford Association. He also served as president of the Lewiston Hereford Association for four years. In addition, he is a member of the Washington Cattlemen's Association and the Garfield and Columbia County Cattlemen's Associations, as well as a charter member of the Pomeroy FFA Alumni Association and a member and past warden of St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

His family

If you spend time with Cox you will soon realize family is very important to him. "I was blessed with two of the most wonderful parents," Cox says. "My mother, who is still with us at age 91, along with my dad, were the most loving and caring individuals. I had everything I could ever possibly want, but unfortunately didn't really realize it until I got into the world."

Cox credits his wife, Terrilie, for helping him live out his childhood dream of raising cattle and wheat. "She has been a stabilizing force in my life. She has given me moral guidance, and with her we've raised our wonderful family that I'm so proud of."

Bill and Terrilie have three grown children — Andria, Josh and Piper — who were active in 4-H, FFA and junior Hereford activities. Although Cox loves his Herefords, his true pride and joy are his five grandchildren, ages 11 months to 8 years old.

After retiring from the Board Nov. 3, Cox will continue to do what he can to help the Hereford breed regain its status as king of the beef industry. "We must have diligence and perseverance as Hereford breeders in order to earn back the market share we have lost since I was young," Cox says with determination. "I think Herefords have a real opportunity, and our time is now to take that opportunity." **HW**