

The Value of Registrations and Transfers



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Please don't talk yourself out of the very thing that has kept you in business.

There is a cornerstone of our purebred livestock business that has become the gold standard of credibility — the registration paper. I have heard on occasion from breeders that their commercial customers care little about the registration paper, but this disinterest is a little short-sighted.

Commercial customers care deeply that the product you sell them is going to deliver to their expectations the economic benefits that you as a seedstock provider promise. But where does your promise start? The entire backbone of the Hereford seedstock industry is built on 1) a pedigree and 2) the performance records and genetic evaluation that support that pedigree.

During tough economic times like our country is facing, seedstock producers might be fighting the temptation to create shortcuts. Thinking, “Maybe I should not register these cattle this year.” Please don't talk yourself out of the very thing that has kept you in business because suddenly it may seem irrelevant with all the other pressures going on.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Our U.S. beef industry is in the midst of a genetic crisis. The genetic diversity within the seedstock sector is at an all-time low. With an insatiable quest for marbling, the Angus breed, with more than 50% use of artificial insemination (AI), has reduced its variation dramatically the last 20 years.

At least a half dozen Continental European breeds have followed the Angus breed by opening up their registry books to form

composites to meet the black-hide specification and to be more like Angus. There are but a few breeds left that truly add diversity to the nation's cow herd, and Hereford would be at the top of the list.

As these other Continental European composites continue to mimic the Angus breed and as the Angus population within the commercial industry begins to reach a saturation point, the value of a Hereford registration paper begins to mean even more. The one breed that can deliver heterosis in a predominantly Angus-based cow herd also has documentation on its pedigree backed by a massive whole herd recording database.

There's a risk of “dumbing down” the pedigree, or not registering seedstock. For one, Hereford breeders begin to legitimize unregistered crossbred seedstock. There are several competitors out there that have made a living in the composite business promoting undocumented crossbred seedstock.

In my opinion, crossbred seedstock robs our commercial customer of invaluable heterosis. As a Hereford breeder, if you choose to sell unregistered, undocumented seedstock, you are virtually robbing yourself of the credibility you've worked so hard to establish.

The value of transfer

Many times commercial producers do not want the registration paper. Knowledge of that ownership at the association level can bring some very good value to your bull customer.

The industry is heading in a direction where documentation is important, and source and age programs can mean the difference in top dollar or a dime back from the market. This is particularly true when the feeder calf market is under stress.

The American Hereford Association (AHA) Board will be discussing ways to ease the process of transferring bulls. We're interested in knowing where those bulls are going because that information gives us a way to communicate with that customer.

Commercial customers who have a bull transferred into their name receive the *Hereford World* tabloid four times a year. This communication provides invaluable information regarding AHA's commercial marketing efforts.

Many of your commercial bull buyers are also buying bulls of other breeds, and you can bet they are receiving information from those other breeds as well. Transferring ownership allows AHA to communicate with buyers and position the breed as a relevant competitor.

Finally, the AHA is interested in knowing where and when baldie feeder cattle are being sold. Through direct communication with your customers, participating Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) feedlots might have a better chance of bidding for those cattle if they know when they are being sent to market ahead of time.

Yes, it is a cost, but the registration and the transfer of ownership of that papered product is a part of the economic engine that drives Hereford market share. **HW**