

The Most Important Ingredient



Jack Ward

Earlier this fall, I attended the Northwest Hereford Tour — traveling through Idaho, Oregon and Washington, visiting ranches and meeting cattlemen. The Hereford breeders in that region certainly rolled out the red carpet for a great crowd that represented 11 states and Canada.

Logging a lot of miles that week, I found the bus trip a great opportunity to visit with and answer questions from breeders on the tour, as well as to hear from those in different regions of the country about their programs. Mark Holt, our Western region field representative, and his wife, Staci, did a wonderful job of organizing this nearly 1,000 mile, three-and-a-half-day event.

The tour combined some of the Hereford breed's best seedstock herd visits along with commercial herd tours. We traveled through some of the most breathtaking scenery that the United States has to offer but yet its some of the most challenging desert conditions.

It was evident that access to water, the most vital ingredient for success for both farmers and ranchers,

created daily challenges. As some have dealt with drought over the past few years and some have dealt with excess rain this year, the ranchers in this region really feel the impact of Mother Nature, government policy and population growth when it comes to water.

Population growth and the trend to urbanize will continue to affect water supplies for agriculture. In most areas of the United States, there are no new sources of unused water, so growing cities increasingly reach out at greater distances to take water currently used by farmers and ranchers.

In the northwest region, this water supply also affects commerce because rivers and the locks and dams system are how many farmers transport their goods. As we rode through this area, it was amazing to hear how producers would run 90 pairs on 80 acres in this tough environment simply with rotation and irrigation.

Population growth will challenge producers on many fronts including a struggle over land and water, and this struggle will demand new technology, with sound policy at the

local, state and national levels. This situation will also affect production practices and will continue to force cattlemen to select for efficiency, fertility and longevity.

It was evident that Hereford cattle will continue to have a large influence in the commercial industry because of the inherent advantages they provide. It also proves that we must continue to make comprehensive selections using all the tools available and to look at new ways to identify genetics that can be used to make sound, science-based decisions.

As you read through this edition of the *Hereford World*, you see the American Hereford Association (AHA) 2015 Annual Report that tells the story of another great year in the Hereford breed with increases in registrations, our membership, the amount of Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) tons sold and the great demand for Hereford genetics. For these, I personally would like to commend the AHA membership, the AHA staff and our leadership for setting a strategy for continued growth. **HW**

