

Winning Attitude Affects Hereford Market



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Our attitude, 99 times out of 100, determines our personal success whether it has to do with family relationships, business relationships or business opportunities. Enjoying the holiday season has everything to do with where our attitude is. The spirit of service and giving is directly related to where we are in heart and mind, and those who tend to enjoy the spirit of the holidays tend to also carry that attitude over into their daily lives throughout the year. I want to share with you how a service mindset and giving attitude can affect the success of your business and your relationships.

Nine years ago a group of Tennessee Hereford breeders met with marketing professionals from Tennessee Livestock Producers (TLP) to pose a challenge. They were tired of their calves being discounted at local sale barns, and they wanted to do something about it.

At the time, Hereford breeders Zack Dismukes

and Stan Webster from Tennessee; John Woolfolk, a Hereford breeder and TLP marketing specialist (John was recently elected an American Hereford Association [AHA] Board member); and Darrell Ailshie, TLP general manager, organized a special feeder calf sale for breeders in Tennessee. These breeders wanted to commingle calves in a large enough group to attract buyers to pay a little more for their cattle by sorting them into uniform load lots. The first few years attracted small numbers with moderate success, and the small group of believers learned a great deal from those early sales.

Over time the few Hereford breeders who participated began to talk to the feedlot operators and backgrounders that purchased their calves and listen to what it was the buyers expected from their calf crops. Despite meager beginnings, the group never gave up and continued to improve upon the program. They believed in their cattle. They began to background their calves prior to sale day, and eventually new buyers would arrive, and repeat buyers developed.

On Oct. 29 Ailshie, Woolfolk and Kevin Ferguson, University of Tennessee farm management specialist, along with 75 consignors from eight states, organized the ninth annual Tennessee Hereford Marketing Program Sale at the

TLP sales facility in Thompson Station.

The sale included 1,008 mixed weight and sex Hereford-influenced feeders that were marketed to three Hereford branded beef program feeders: all of which were repeat buyers. Tom Feller, Wisner, Neb., purchased two loads projected to go to the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) program through Greater Omaha Packing Co. Inc. Randy DeBruin, owner of RSD Farms in Oskaloosa, Iowa, purchased four loads destined for Vande Rose Farms Premium Hereford Beef program, and Danny Herrmann, Ford County Feedyard Inc., Ford, Kan., purchased four loads destined for the CHB program at one of the National Beef Packing Co. LLC plants. In addition to the three Midwest buyers, two local Tennessee buyers purchased three loads: two of which went to western Kansas to be put on wheat pasture and will likely be headed to Ford County Feedyard, and one load is being backgrounded in Tennessee. Jim Williams, CHB LLC vice president of supply, was influential in getting the buyers to the sale.

The calves topped the Tennessee market that week across weight and sex classes, making the long trip for many of the consignors well worth it. Woolfolk summed up the event: "These Hereford cattle topped the Tennessee sales for the week because they



Producers from seven states consigned 1,008 age-, source- and health-verified Herefords and Hereford-crosses to the 2007 Tennessee Hereford Marketing Program Sale. The group brought \$55,000 in premiums. Consignors earned on average an additional \$69.15 per head by participating in organized marketing efforts, bringing together the numbers and verification feeders demand.

were part of a program. Our producers listened to what the feeders demanded in a health program and weaned the calves and gave the proper shots weeks before the sale. We limited the number of problem cattle like late cuts, poor doers and sick cattle. We sorted the calves into feeding outcome groups and created invaluable uniformity.”

Hereford breeders did more than that. They had an attitude of cooperation with their minds on the feedlot customer. In other words, their mindset changed from being a taker to being a giver, and they focused on what it was they could do

to make their calves perform better for the end user.

They also committed to one another the numbers of cattle, and in many cases drove several 100 miles to meet their numbers commitment to one another. The average producer group was 12 head and the largest was 33 head. This commitment to one another, their customers and a program that over time has become bigger than any of them individually has been built on a positive and winning attitude. An attitude we can all tap into when we want to.

Congratulations to all involved. Merry Christmas! **HW**



Tennessee Hereford breeders Rob Helms, Bill Ashe, Ronald Bain and John Woolfolk discuss the high quality of cattle that were brought to the sale.