

Bold Board Action Positions Breed for the Future



Craig Huffhines

The American Hereford Association (AHA) Board of Directors tackled several cutting-edge issues during the Board meeting in Kansas City Oct. 28-29.

Technology is driving the beef industry at a very rapid pace and the Board continues to deal with “hot topics” such as the direction of the AHA genomics programs, continued crossbreeding research and the prospects of Hereford crossbred seedstock, novel Internet marketing capabilities, new business systems for farm and ranch data transfer to the AHA office, to a new and bold step in DNA verification of herd sires.

These are not only the most exciting times for the Hereford breed in terms of market demand for our product, but we as an association have been blessed with Board leadership that is always thinking about the future.

In almost every area we deal with as an Association we are discussing new technology developments that will help our members make better decisions in beef cattle breeding and will assist them with the massive transfer of information that they all collect on their farm and ranch, or new ideas for product marketing. The road map for the organization as defined in the AHA Strategic Plan is a tool that staff and the

Board has been using to navigate what sometimes seems like choppy waters.

The following is a list of those items of action the AHA Board took during the meeting:

Breed improvement/genomic research

The AHA has debated for some time the best way to conduct discovery of genomic research that might help us improve the accuracy of young animals so that the breed can make more rapid breed improvement through quicker generation turnover.

AHA has established a research relationship with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium (NBCEC), a group of five universities that collaborate together to leverage federal research dollars.

Iowa State University’s Dorian Garrick, NBCEC executive director, is the leader on the Hereford project and the AHA Board has submitted approximately 800 head of genotypes to Iowa State University for genetic discovery purposes.

Initial research results as reported by Iowa State were not strong enough for commercial adoption but did show promise in explaining a small portion of the variation in birth weight, weaning weight, growth and carcass attributes.

The Board is hopeful that continued gathering of genotypes on highly proven bulls and continued mining of the Hereford genome will eventually unveil genetic markers that will be useful in improving the Hereford genetic evaluation.

New sire DNA policy

The AHA will require all Hereford sires born after Jan. 1, 2011, to be DNA genotyped at the official AHA DNA laboratory before their progeny can be registered.

This policy has been adopted to improve the quality control of pedigrees. Numerous times during the year AHA staff identifies pedigree mistakes, and the discovery comes at times when it is very difficult to make a determination of correct parentage of an animal. Genotyping walking herd sires will be very beneficial toward minimizing this issue in a cost-effective manner.

Baldie documentation pilot project

As a continuation of the crossbreeding research that has been ongoing the last four years, the AHA will be developing an extension of those efforts by collecting data from breeders who have both a purebred Hereford and Angus operation in the same contemporary group.

continued on page 6...

It has been noted that several breeders are beginning to produce Hereford × Angus cross bulls and females and merchandising them as seedstock. The pilot project will collect data for the purpose of estimating heterosis effects and for developing a crossbreed expected progeny difference (EPD) for baldie cattle.

Audit report

Lead auditor Marc Johnson, from AHA's audit firm Kennedy and Coe LLC presented the 2010 fiscal year-end financial report. AHA reported total assets of \$4,721,031 and a year-end consolidated loss of (\$259,857). Johnson reported that the organization is managed with good controls and understanding of the business.

Certified Hereford Beef LLC

A review of the investment in Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC was presented by CHB LLC Chairman Marshall Ernst and myself. Since 2000 the AHA has invested more than \$1.4 million in the program.

During that time, 404 million lb. of CHB has been sold. In addition, the number of carcasses processed and certified was 2.19 million head and 3.58 million head of Hereford-influenced cattle have been identified through licensed packing plants. This past year AHA invested \$300,000 in the program.

Officer election

John Woolfolk was elected 2011 AHA president and David Breiner was elected vice president. Dale Micheli was elected CHB LLC chairman and Marty Lueck was named chairman of the Hereford Publications Inc. board.

Marketing committee report

The final report of the Harris Ranch study was released. Three years of economic data compared the performance and heterosis effect of Hereford-sired baldie calves compared to straight Angus

calves. The direct impact of heterosis was a \$30 advantage per head on calves not including the maternal heterosis of the females. Two years of female data reported a 7% advantage in pregnancy rates adding an additional \$50 per head in maternal advantage.

Final reports are available online or by contacting Angie Denton at adenton@hereford.org.

Field staff position

AHA currently has an opening in the southeast region and candidates for the job will be interviewed for a spring placement.

BuyHereford.com

The Board reviewed the prospects and progress of the *BuyHereford.com* marketing service. It was noted that the staff has learned a great deal about how this service can be improved while the number of visitors to the site continues to grow. The Board directed the staff to form a focus group to continue to evaluate the system and its prospects for the future. It is anticipated that this service will provide state-of-the-art marketing features for large and small breeders alike.

Hereford Publications Inc.

The magazine reported a \$12,379 profit for fiscal year 2010. Staff continues to bundle magazine advertising with banner advertising. Banner ads rotate throughout the *Hereford.org* Web site, which in September had 72,016 page views by 22,540 unique visitors. Again this year the *Hereford World* tabloid won the top newspaper award from the Livestock Publications Council at the Ag Media Summit.

Member service report

An electronic survey of the membership will be forthcoming to determine what technology needs are being met or need to be improved for the transfer of performance data and for registry and ownership transfer

submission. In addition, it is planned that webinars will be utilized for educational purposes and information from members. Webinars are a very simple online system for communicating information to users.

New registry business system development

AHA has begun the development of a new internal registry business system that will be launched in July 2011.

Free printed sire summaries discontinued

The Board reported that this will be the last year for free sire summaries. Due to the cost of printing and postage and the fact that the entire sire summary is now on the AHA Web site, members will be asked if they wish to purchase a bound copy. The price has yet to be established.

Farm management software collaboration

Several herd management software companies are currently being worked with in an effort to make the products more user-friendly and to better interface with the AHA's system for easy downloading of information. These products include CattleMax, GEM and CattlePro.

Show awards

For show season 2011-2012, the Board will acknowledge only the show bull and show female of the year with the coveted bronze bull and cow while the regional bulls and females of the year will receive plaques.

JNHE judges determined

The AHA Board worked with the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board to approve prospective judges for the 2011 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Kansas City. **HW**