

Breed Improvement Update



Jack Ward

The American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting weekend is complete, and we appreciate everyone who took the time to attend the various meetings and events. I especially want to thank everyone who was able to attend the educational forum. The breed improvement committee has several things going on, and there was plenty of discussion during the week. I specifically would like to keep you up-to-date on several very important topics that are facing the committee.

Genomics

The AHA entered into a project over the summer with the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium (NBCEC) and the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC) to look at the proper way to train and validate a breed specific panel that could be used in genetic evaluations.

We are working specifically with Dorian Garrick, Iowa State University Lush chair in animal breeding and genetics and NBCEC executive director.

Dorian gave a report to the Board and then to the membership during the educational forum. For this project, Dorian took the 800 Hereford animals that have 50K genotypes to try to train a panel for all measurable traits. These 800 animals were split into four groups by pedigree, and the training was done on each group and

then validated by a subset of the 800.

The correlations looked promising for a few of the traits, and in order to make this panel stronger, we need to collect more 50K genotypes. So, if you are interested in participating in the project, contact me at jward@hereford.org or 816-842-3757. We would like to run 50K genotypes on sires at this time, so if you have some semen and would be willing to spend the \$150 to run the 50K, let me know.

This project will be vital as we begin adding genomics into the genetic analysis. In addition, talks are underway with ABRI (Agricultural Business Research Institute) on how to add genomics into the evaluation. One of the biggest underlying points of this project is that the AHA and its membership will own the 50K genotypes, and along with the pedigree and phenotypes, this factor allows us to have control of how these genomics tests will be used.

Baldie evaluation

The AHA Board also gave staff the approval to move forward with some research on a baldie evaluation. What we plan to do is to collect data on contemporary groups of cattle that are Angus, Hereford and F1 baldies. The significance of this program will be to continue to build on the heterosis projects we have started.

More importantly, this research will allow us to actually analyze the various

adjustment factors for all traits measured between breeds, and we will be able to look at across-breed adjustments. Ultimately, this information should give us the power to continue to build our genetic analysis and create a population where we can give some valuable information to breeders that want to market Hereford-Angus or Angus-Hereford genetics. If you run both breeds and would be willing to share your Angus information with us to build the research population, give me a call.

DNA all sires

The Board also passed a motion to begin to collect DNA on all sires in order to register progeny. The rule reads like this: "All sires born on or after Jan. 1, 2011, will need to have a DNA profile at the official AHA lab before calves sired by that bull will be registered."

This rule will be important for several reasons. In the short term, it will protect pedigrees and will also allow us to have surveillance on genetic abnormalities. In the long term, we will be able to utilize the genetic makeup of these bulls in the genetic analysis as we move forward with marker-assisted expected progeny differences (MA EPDs). This program has been implemented by the Canadian Hereford Association for a few years, and it will not be a big leap for the AHA. More than

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60% of the calves registered today already have their sires' DNA profiled.

Finally, I want to take a moment to congratulate all of those breeders who were recognized at the Annual Meeting including the Hall of Fame and Hall of Merit inductees, all Golden and Century breeders and all of the juniors who were awarded scholarships.

As mentioned by many of the speakers over the weekend, this breed continues to grow market share. Commercial producers want efficiency, need fertility, demand calving ease and, most importantly, want cattle that have the right disposition. This breed is poised to continue to grow, and it will be from the hard work that

the membership puts forth. Continue to collect information at all levels of production including chute scores at weaning.

As always, I want to wish all of you a very blessed and merry Christmas. **HW**