

# Educational Forum Kicks Off Annual Meeting

We have just completed another very successful annual meeting that shows the tremendous excitement and dedication Hereford breeders are making toward the improvement of the breed.

The meeting started with a great educational forum with Dorian Garrick giving us an update on how the American Hereford Association (AHA) is progressing with a Hereford specific genomic panel.

During the last year and a half, the AHA Board has directed staff to move aggressively forward with the science community to build genomic tools that will help identify Hereford genetics that are going to make an influence in the commercial industry. These genomic tools will give Hereford breeders another tool to make genetic improvement in the right direction for their customers.

Dorian reported that the correlations are done and the information has been sent to ABRI (Agricultural Business Research Institute) to be used alongside the genetic evaluation. Basically, what will happen is that a breeder will test an animal at the AHA official lab, and an MBV (molecular breeding value) will be produced. This MBV will be used to help add accuracy and change the EPD (expected progeny difference) for the animal that is tested.

I would suggest you could look at this as a number that will act similarly to an interim number but will be reflective of the true genetic value of the animal. Only animals

that have the genomic panel run will have marker-assisted (MA) EPDs at this time.

This technology is moving exponentially, and the AHA has positioned itself well to be able to utilize this technology to its fullest. The challenge for all of us is to continue to collect phenotypes and to continue to test both high and low accuracy bulls so that we will be able to train and validate a Hereford specific panel. The bottom line is that the more we do the better this gets.

The AHA has spent countless resources and has leveraged itself well to correctly build the panel. By the time you read this article, the first research release should be available. As the membership continues to test animals, the AHA will begin to sequence high accuracy bulls in order to potentially identify specific genes within the Hereford genome that have the largest effect on the different traits. In addition, the AHA will continue to build populations and collect phenotypes on some of the more difficult traits like feed intake and tenderness in order to identify markers for genetic improvement.

The second speaker at the educational forum was Matt Spangler, who gave us a recap of the importance of EPDs and how we should continue to use them as we make sire selection decisions.

He also informed the membership about AHA's role in the weight trait project and also the feed efficiency grant.

I want to thank Dorian and Matt and the entire science community for

helping the AHA set a path in the right direction in the area of genomics. This is truly a new frontier, and we will continue to rely on the scientists at the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium (NBCEC) and U.S. Meat Animal Research Center to lead us in the right direction.

The third speaker during the educational forum was Bill Beal. He gave the large crowd a real education in the area of reproduction and how important it is to get your cows bred. He entertained the crowd while informing them about how a cow cycles and what needs to be done to properly identify cows that are in heat and the proper timing of breeding.

In addition to the presentations, the drawing was done for the three embryos donated by John and Mona Loewen from the dam of "Foundation," the bull donated to the Hereford Research Foundation (HRF) and leased to ABS, to one of the shareholders. The lucky name drawn from the hat was Alex Mih, M-M Ranch of Kansas.

"Foundation" has raised nearly \$20,000 for the HRF, and ABS will give all profits through semen sales to the HRF. John also said that if we could sell five more shares on the bull before next year's annual meeting, he will donate three more embryos for another drawing.

Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year! Let's continue to make the genetic improvement we need to keep this breed moving in the right direction. **HW**



Jack Ward

## Mature cow weight EPD

The AHA has recently released a mature cow weight (MCW) expected progeny difference (EPD). You will find this on the website and on reports in the near future. This EPD is just like all others and will allow you to make selections between animals.

You can compare animals just like any other trait. For example, if bull A is 85 for MCW and bull B is 100, then you would expect the average size of bull B's daughters to be 15 lb. heavier in mature form, if from similar dams. **HW**