

AHA Hosts Educational Forum

by Julie Mais

Hereford breeders gathered to “Talk Hereford” Oct. 29 during the educational forum. This year the American Hereford Association (AHA) expanded the forum format to include six breakout sessions for an in-depth look into Association programs including *MyHerd.org*, Creative Services, Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®), Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™), social media marketing and leadership. Attendees had the opportunity to attend four of the six sessions to learn more about topics of their choice.

MyHerd.org: The Efficiency of Electronic Recording

AHA Director of Records Stacy Sanders and Education and Information Service Coordinator SyAnn Foster gave an overview of *MyHerd.org* for nonusers and new members.

Sanders said MyHerd provides efficiency through electronic recording. “This efficiency is not just what happens on the ranch or in the AHA office,” he explained. “This efficiency in the exchange between the two. By doing things electronically, we take the postal service out of the equation so both sides are not waiting on mail. And, if you are doing things through MyHerd, there’s no processing. As soon as you enter registration or transfer and there are no errors or warnings and you pay for it, it’s done.”

Sanders stressed that MyHerd still provides options. “We understand not one system will fit every member’s herd management needs.” Herd software programs like CattleMax and GEM work well with MyHerd. In fact, he said, 25% of the information coming into the records department is from herd management software.

In this session, Sanders also talked about the many features of MyHerd including registration, animal transfer, personal lists, artificial insemination (AI) certificate release and online bill pay. He also discussed two new features recently released: calf crop data download and DNA test requests and results.

Foster shared ways MyHerd users can learn more about features. “When it was launched in 2014, the AHA wanted to make it as user-friendly as possible,” she said. “The School of MyHerd was developed and staff hosted webinars to help members learn more about MyHerd’s features.”

The School of MyHerd recently transitioned to tutorials to help breeders utilize MyHerd to the fullest. “On *Hereford.org* you can access the tutorials at any time,” Foster said. Right now we have 23 tutorials to cover basic features.” MyHerd tutorials can be found under the “Education Center” tab and then by clicking on “School of MyHerd Tutorials.”

Creative Services: Capture an Outstanding Photo, Logo, Brochure or Catalog

During this session, Joe Rickabaugh, AHA director of field management and seedstock marketing, led the conversation between attendees and Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI) staff, opening the door for learning how to get the most out of Creative Services projects.

“It all starts with knowing your timeline,” said Caryn Vaught, HPI production manager. “Working back from your sale date or deadline and getting us the pieces in a timely manner really helps us create a superior product for our customers.” Vaught encouraged attendees to work with the Creative Services staff to create a project timeline.

Graphic Designer Sean Jersett, and Editorial Designer Christy Benigno said high-resolution photos play an important role in producing standout advertisements, sale catalogs and magazine layouts. Benigno said a professional camera is the best choice for capturing photos for print design, and when breeders send in photos, e-mail is better than texting when it comes to sharing quality photos.

Advertising Coordinator Alison Marx directed attention to HPI’s new media kit, which details numerous marketing options for breeders along

with the many services HPI can provide. The 2017 Media Kit can be found at *Hereford.org*.

Certified Hereford Beef: Excellence Built By Tradition

Participants learned the reason why the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) program was formed and the requirements to qualify for the program from Chief Operating Officer Amari Manning and Director of Commercial Programs Trey Befort.

“CHB was created to provide a way to market the Hereford breed,” Manning said. “Creating consumer awareness of the brand ultimately creates demand for the product and, in return, creates additional value for Hereford cattle.”

Befort said cattle that qualify for this U.S. Department of Agriculture certified program must first meet live animal specifications. “They then have to meet 10 carcass requirements, which ensures the customer is getting a high-quality, consistent product,” Befort said.

Manning said the CHB team works to market the product through food service and retail and by creating consumer awareness. “Our goal is to have a food service distributor and retail in the same market so when someone has a great eating experience and wants to recreate that at home, they can go to their grocery store to purchase CHB,” Manning said.

In fiscal year 2016, 54.8 million lb. of CHB product was sold — a 7% increase from the previous year.

Befort said as CHB demand continues to grow, the importance of raising high-quality animals will continue to grow. “Hereford breeders have done a great job of growing the breed and fixing problems,” he said. But Befort challenged breeders to get more involved in the brand.

For seedstock producers, customer service and communicating with customers are key, Befort said. "If they have a group selling, offer some ideas of people interested in buying Hereford and Hereford-influenced cattle."

Befort also shared about The Hereford Advantage feeder calf program, which identifies groups of cattle out of superior genetics. More information can be found at Hereford.org.

Whole Herd TPR Genetic Evaluation Updates: What You Need to Know

AHA Director of Breed Improvement Shane Bedwell discussed the implementation of new genetic evaluation updates and provided a roadmap for the future of the Hereford breed.

"A lot has changed in a fairly young and new genomic era," Bedwell said. "It's only 5-6 years old, and there's a great horizon still out there."

It's the Association's responsibility to collect genomic information, and Bedwell shared that the AHA has more than 28,000 genotypes.

To keep up with progress, Bedwell said the Association needs to stay updated. This need led the Association to begin moving to the new genetic evaluation software, BOLT.

Bedwell outlined advantages of the new software. He said BOLT will create a more robust evaluation. It increases efficiency due to automated data extracts and runs and will have a more streamlined process. This software also allows for more frequent evaluations and the possibility of weekly or biweekly evaluations.

"BOLT offers adaptability of adding new traits," Bedwell said. "The sky is the limit as DNA marker research continues."

Bedwell also said Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI) will stay as the provider. This arrangement will have mutual efficiency benefits like increased diagnostic and customer support and saving AHA costs for additional staff.

"Genotypes are a valuable tool, and we need to continue to capture more genotypes," Bedwell said. "However, phenotypes still drive the bus and will continue to be important. What are now hard-to-measure phenotypes can now have



Hereford breeders had the opportunity to attend four of six breakout sessions at the educational forum during the AHA Annual Meeting.

markers developed to give us a better idea of how to progress."

He shared that the goal implementation date is late spring 2017. Look for updates in upcoming *Hereford World* issues.

Social Media Marketing: Navigating a Social World

In this session, AHA Marketing and Communications Coordinators Kaylen Baker and Katy Holdener gave breeders tips on how to take social media marketing to the next level. When compared to a website, social media can help businesses connect on a personal level.

"Branding is everything," Baker said. And social media can be a tool in branding a business.

The first step in utilizing social media is to create goals via audience. For those using Facebook, analytics can be helpful. "It's important to create engaging content people want to see," she said.

To create engaging content on Facebook, Baker said sharing photos and videos increases engagement by 80%. Holdener said video is up and coming, but it's important to keep videos at 60 to 90 seconds in length.

Once content is decided, it's time to share information. Noting cattlemen are not always near a computer, Holdener suggested scheduling posts. "This is a great tool to keep up with social media for those who are traveling or will be away from a computer or smart phone," she said.

Instagram, a photography-based platform, is popular with the millennial group. "This platform is a great way to reach a young audience," Baker said.

Holdener said it's important to take high-quality, relatable photos. "Use hashtags as keywords in captions, and engage with others by liking posts," she said. When setting up an Instagram

account for a business, Holdener suggested choosing a name as close to the business name as possible.

Baker and Holdener also discussed Twitter with the group. "This platform is a great way to start a conversation," Holdener said. Because of a 140-character limit, Holdener said sharing photos is a great way to share more information within a post.

New Heights in Leadership

Hereford breeders heard from Kelly Barnes, Norman, Okla., who led an inspiring and entertaining discussion on the difference between being "in" an organization and being "involved."

Barnes grew up on a family farm in eastern Oklahoma and is a past Oklahoma FFA president.

He questioned the audience about why they are a part of the Hereford breed and cattle industry. "Whatever the reason you're a part of this industry, what we have in common is that we are involved," he said.

With group participation, he asked another question to younger participants and then to the older, "What are some things you see the other generation doing that is hurting them on a big scale?"

Upon hearing the answers, Barnes gave three tips to bridge the gap. First, be present. "Be here and be now," he said. "The most important thing you can learn is about one another." Second, appreciate the little things. Third, pack an extra sandwich, referring to a story of a young boy who asked his mom to pack him an extra sandwich for school trips to share with a classmate who goes without. "Let's not forget to help others out and do good for goodness sake," he said. "In our life people will remember one of two things — what you did to them and what you did for them." **HW**