

Feed Efficiency, Survivability, Fertility Highlight Forum



Jack Ward

This month's *Hereford World* is filled with information from the 2006 American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting and related activities. It was an exciting weekend filled with informative sessions and a lot of conversation about the Hereford breed continuing to grow in both the purebred and commercial circles.

In this column, I'd like to explain a couple of the issues that were part of the breeders' forum on Oct. 21. First of all, Dan Moser, Kansas State University associate professor, gave a great presentation to the AHA Board and during the breeders' forum about research on survivability and fertility.

Moser's message was clear. He said that with more than six years of Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™), the Hereford breed should have the capability to address a survivability index or expected progeny difference (EPD), which should add some power to the indexes and also be a useful tool in and of itself to track Hereford genetics with added longevity.

Breeders can rest assured that the power of total performance collection through whole-herd reporting has given us meaningful data and increased accuracies on the traits collected. However, we do need additional information such as disposal codes, udder quality scores, cow weights and body condition scores to create a powerful survivability index. This will also allow us to measure fertility more accurately.

The Hereford economic selection indexes, which were developed two years ago, play a major role in how breeders market cattle. These indexes allow a producer to select specific target markets and aim their cattle toward those markets. For example, if a breeder has a customer who is using Hereford genetics in a British-breed cross for replacements, the Baldy Maternal Index (BMI\$) is where the emphasis needs to be for selection. With this said, we are actively seeking ways to strengthen the indexes. The stayability and fertility research will make the indexes an even more powerful selection and marketing tool.

On Saturday morning, we also had the pleasure of hearing a great presentation on the importance of feed efficiency by Monty Kerley, University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) animal scientist and professor. Kerley gave a presentation on how he is using the feed efficiency feedlot at MU to evaluate residual feed intake. Basically this is a process that compares the amount of feed an animal actually consumes to what we would expect it to consume.

Kerley explained the work that has been done with MU's purebred Hereford herd and also the results of bull tests within the state. The preliminary results look good for Hereford genetics. Over the next several years, the AHA plans to work with Kerley on several projects looking at the value of Hereford genetics in the feedlot. This information will be invaluable for discovery and validation of potential markers in the area of feed efficiency.

I would like to thank everyone who came to the office on the Friday evening before the Annual Meeting to participate in the online Hereford 101. We had a great crowd here and a great crowd online. These meetings have allowed us to touch breeders from Washington to Connecticut and everywhere in between. Please continue to look for future Webinar announcements in Hereford eNews and posted in the "Announcements" section at *Hereford.org*. Feel free to contact me to obtain copies of past presentations. The next online Hereford 101 is scheduled for Dec. 14.

On a final note, I want to wish everyone a joyous holiday season. The good Lord has blessed each one of us with family and friends. I hope your holiday season is safe.

Please continue your dedication to the improvement of the Hereford breed and the cattle industry. We have gained a great deal over the past few years because of your endurance. The sky is the limit for Hereford genetics. **HW**

Don't forget

As of Dec. 1, every 250th artificial insemination (AI) or embryo transfer (ET) calf will be parentage verified. This means that no registration papers will be issued on these calves until the parentage verification is done. The AHA will assume verification expenses. **HW**