

# Maternal Matters



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Each year the American Hereford Association (AHA) recognizes outstanding females and sires through the Dams of Distinction (DOD) and Sire of Distinction (SOD) programs. These recognition programs are a great way to award not only the females and respective sires behind these daughters, but also to showcase the breeders who have made a commitment to turning in timely data and upholding stringent management practices.

To qualify for DOD, a cow must maintain a proper calving interval after being in production along with having a strong nursing ratio over the number of calves raised. Few females make the list, but I'm proud to say this year, nearly 200 more females were labeled with the prestigious DOD label than compared to a year ago. Turn to Page 34 to see the 2016 Dams of Distinction.

Likewise, the number of Sires of Distinction increased compared to a year ago. On Page 40 you will find a total of 106 new sires that are now labeled as SOD on their pedigrees. For a sire to qualify for this award, he must sire females that have been recognized as a DOD a minimum of seven times.

He can achieve this status by either putting back seven daughters in the herd that all receive the DOD recognition or by siring one female that has

achieved the recognition the last seven years. Either way, it finds the bulls that are truly going beyond the basics when it comes to producing daughters that can breed back efficiently and produce more pounds at weaning — accomplishments which are easier said than done. My congratulations are extended to the breeders behind these cattle. Keep up the good work.

## Maternal efficiency

Maternal efficiency is important, but often it takes a back seat when compared to growth and end-product merit. I feel, in most cases, the decision is not intentional, but in an industry driven by maximizing outputs, it's easy to lose focus of inputs. There's been no better wakeup call than here in the last year and half with the way feeder calf prices have come off record highs. Before, it didn't matter what you sold at auction, it was going to bring a premium. Now, however, those margins are a lot tighter.

Because of this change, commercial producers are talking again about low-input females that can breed back on time and still wean a big calf. Luckily the good Lord put Herefords on this earth with the ability to withstand a variety of environments and to produce a healthy calf, while remaining fertile and docile. But to keep this God-given talent, we

must continue to select for it and keep emphasis on these maternal efficiencies.

There are several tools available to help you maximize these females through the AHA. I would encourage you to keep collecting cow weights and udder scores, as well as accurately recording the disposal codes at culling time. These measures will continue to give Hereford great leverage.

So, as you are making your final artificial insemination (AI) decisions this spring, keep the maternal efficiencies in mind along with supplying the needed growth and end-product merit. By using the "Select if" section of the expected progeny difference (EPD) search at [Hereford.org](http://Hereford.org), you will be able to find sires that have been designated with SOD, and at the same time, you can put in the minimums and maximums for the other economically relevant traits where you need to make progress.

Also, please make plans to attend this year's Beef Improvement Federation convention hosted in Athens, Ga., May 31-June 3. Registration information and schedules are available online at [beefimprovement.org](http://beefimprovement.org), and you can look for more information on the AHA website. **HW**