

Commitment to Customer Service

Commercial cattlemen still rely on seedstock breeders to have their genetic programs in order.



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As you read this article, many of you will have either marketed your spring-born feeder calves through video sales, or you are making plans to get calves properly weaned and vaccinated in order to market later this fall. I listened to a Hereford seedstock breeder speak to a group of producers a few years back, and at the end of his presentation he left the crowd with this quote, “Remember that your breed is only as good as the poorest feeder calf sold through your local sale barn.”

This is such a strong message — as seedstock producers, we need to keep this in mind as we make selections and breeding decisions. Remember, that customer service should not end when a buyer leaves with a young bull.

As seedstock breeders, we need to understand our customers, their breeding programs and to help them with selections. Commercial cattlemen still rely on seedstock producers to make sure the genetic portion of their programs are in order. Commercial cattlemen are dependent on you to use all of the tools available to provide the most reliable genetics.

Ask questions and find out what the Hereford component of their commercial programs need to address. If your customers are building a cow herd, then maternal traits are certainly a focus, but a balance is important

because someone will ultimately feed the steers and culled heifers, and then a packer will harvest them. These folks know a lot about your genetics and your customers' cattle — you need to build a relationship with them.

Feeder calf program

The Hereford Advantage program was developed at the American Hereford Association (AHA) to help you identify genetics that excel in growth and end product merit. This genetic tool was developed with the help of large feedlot managers who shared past results of Hereford genetics of where they excelled or lacked. This tool may not be perfect, and we may have set the bar a little high — it may also have too much focus on growth and end product if a commercial producer is needing Hereford genetics to only build a cow herd. However, a balance of both can be obtained through selection.

Genetics are certainly not the only component that makes a successful feeder calf. Both proper weaning and vaccination can also play equally important roles. As a seedstock producer, it can be beneficial to work with customers to make sure these are handled properly. If any portion of the chain is broken, it is easiest to blame the genetics and possibly lose a customer. It's important to build

a relationship with your customers and get them around a table with others that can lend a hand to build a program that will be successful for all.

This leads me back to the feedyard or backgrounder and the packer — gather information and make use of it. This certainly is harder to do in some parts of the country because feeder calves can get comingled and shipped miles away, but it is not impossible. It may take some commitment and a strategy, and that does not happen overnight.

Remember, “You are only as good as the poorest feeder calf you sell.” We need to remember that all cattle ultimately find a way to a packer and then a consumer. We need to continue our focus on making genetic improvement and stay involved with customer service.

The junior feedout program created an opportunity to work with our junior members and give them a taste of the cattle business a little further down the chain. I am proud of the commitment of the juniors in our first test, and I would encourage all of you to look at this program this fall. Also, plan to be with us at the Annual Meeting and Conference, Oct. 27-29, in Kansas City, Mo., to review the results of this program and honor the kids that participated in this inaugural event. **HW**