

HEREFORD

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WORLD

A Firm Foundation

From trial and error to returning to what's tried and true, Sneed Pool Cattle Co. Inc. has found its foundation in the Hereford female.

by *Julie Mais*

She stands back at the trucks, ample distance from the dusty corrals for the lead cows not to take notice of her, but close enough so she can see the group come in. It's a windy morning in the Texas Panhandle, as the day's hired help on horseback bring in a group of Hereford cows and calves for branding and vaccination. Anxious to look over her herd, Pam Stevens beams with satisfaction as the first pairs trot in.

For nearly a century, Hereford cows have been a mainstay for Sneed Pool Cattle Co. Inc., a 450-head

commercial Hereford operation northwest of Amarillo, Texas. According to Sneed Pool's president, Stevens, it's easy to see why.

"When my great grandfather decided to buy purebred cattle in the early 1900s, he chose Hereford," Stevens says. "They were the cattle that fit the country here, made the most use out of the grass and produced the most enriched milk for the calves."

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Fall Management Tips**



“I will always be convinced a Hereford-based herd will be best for crosses.”

— Pam Stevens



The Sneed Pool Cattle Co. Inc. breeding program focuses on maternal traits and retains heifers for replacements.

Over the years, Stevens and her family have introduced different breeds into their operation but kept coming back to Hereford genetics.

Decades in the Texas Panhandle

In the early 1900s, Sneed Pool’s founder, J.T. Sneed Jr., was in the banking business and developed an interest in the cattle industry. He moved from Georgetown, Texas, to Dalhart in the Texas Panhandle, purchasing land with his brother, Beal. Soon after, Beal sold his interest to their father, J.T. Sneed Sr., and the two expanded their ranch on which they exclusively grazed steers.

Upon his father’s death in 1912, Sneed began purchasing Hereford cows. His daughter Elizabeth Sneed Pool Robinett carried on the ranching operations when Sneed passed away in 1940. In order to keep the land and to pay the bills, she had to sell all the cattle. “When she got some money, she started buying cattle again,” Stevens says.

Elizabeth had one son, Joseph Pool, Stevens’ father, who would eventually inherit the ranch. “When my grandmother passed away, my father wanted the ranch to be incorporated,” Stevens says, and the name was changed to Sneed Pool Cattle Co. Inc. “He was the boss for a long time, but cattle were not his main interest,” she says. Pool was a practicing lawyer and raised his three daughters in Amarillo.

Growing up, Stevens visited the ranch as often as she could and learned a great deal from the foreman. “This is what I’ve always wanted to do,” she says. “When my father got tired of me suggesting he do this and that, he turned the breeding program over to me,” she laughs, remembering fondly.

Stevens says she brought new ideas to the ranch and introduced crossbreeding in the 1990s, trying Brahman, Brangus and Charolais. “They do ok, and we had some success with this. We then tried Angus, which were the most successful cross for us,” she says, but notes Hereford was still the base of the herd and the common denominator to their success. “Hereford is every bit as good, or better, than Angus, and I like Angus too. I will always be convinced a Hereford-based herd will be best for crosses.”

Sneed Pool today

Today, Sneed Pool has two ranches — one with a Hereford herd and one with an Angus-based herd. The 450-head Hereford cow herd is bred naturally to bulls to calve in the spring. Though traditionally the base is Line 1 genetics, Sneed Pool has recently utilized Holden Herefords, Valier, Mont., and Barber Ranch, Channing, Texas, breeding programs. The ranch retains heifers for replacement and markets steer calves at weaning. Heifers are kept postweaning for 90 to 100 days before replacement selection is made.

Cody White has worked for Sneed Pool for 12 years and has been managing the Hereford herd for nearly a year. He says the ranch’s focus is on maternal genetics. However, “As far as breed average,” he says, “we tested above average in ribeye, weaning weight, yearling weight and marbling.”

Stevens and White agree that it’s the breed’s efficiency, longevity and adaptability they find most appealing.

“We’re getting a 95 to 96% breed back in our program,” White says. “Our calves are about six months old when we wean and weigh around 560 lb. This is a good number for our feeding program.”

White allots one cow per 30 acres to graze and supplements the native grasses with a Hudson Livestock Supplement tub at 22% protein. White says this tub is also fortified with COMAX, which promotes bacterial growth and increases rumen function.

In 1993 the ranch began routinely pregnancy checking the herd. Stevens says, “When I was growing up, every cow was shipped off at 9 years old no matter what. We had this one cow come in with a beautiful calf every year so I didn’t want to ship her. At 13, she finally came in open and was culled.”

White agrees and says, “We’ve got some cows between 10 and 13 years old that are as fat as a tick and wean a big, soggy calve every year. They’ve done exceptionally well.”

Stevens adds, “We do really well with our Herefords and they are adaptable.”

Over the decades, Sneed Pool has continued to improve its herd genetics and the ranch’s feeding and health programs. This summer, for the first time, the ranch retained a handful of Hereford bull calves to raise as replacements. “The genetics are so strong so we wanted to try keeping some,” White says. In the next few years, White hopes to market replacement females. He has been working to rebuild the ranch’s herd following a drought five years ago when it sold some cows and didn’t retain any heifers.

Looking forward, Stevens will continue to select for efficiency — utilizing fewer acres to produce more beef — choosing the right cattle to fit their environment. At the end of the day, she says, “I want to produce a product that fits the land, one we can be proud of and one that the public loves.” **HW**



Sneed Pool Hereford herd manager Cody White says he appreciates the breed’s longevity.



Sneed Pool Cattle Co. Inc. President Pam Stevens says Hereford is the breed of cattle that best fits the environment on this Texas Panhandle ranch.