

Embracing Genomics

The AHA continues to advance in breed improvement with help from breeders embracing genomic technology.



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It's hard to believe December is here. The saying "time flies by when you're having fun" would apply for me this last year. What a year it has been for Hereford, and I can't help but think the best is yet to come.

Witnessing the enthusiasm at the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting and Conference was truly remarkable and encouraging as we continue to advance in the areas of breed improvement.

This year's educational forum spent the morning discussing the fundamental changes of the updated genetic evaluation. Bruce Golden, CEO of Theta Solutions LLC, and Dorian Garrick, AL Rae Center chief scientist, dug in deep to changes taking place as we switch over to the updated genetic evaluation utilizing Biometric Open Language Tools (BOLT). I have summarized the key differences of the updated genetic evaluation, and you can find these on Page 28.

Updated genetic evaluation

As we move forward in this genetic evaluation transition, it will be important to understand the changes we have made and the thought process behind them. I feel confident the changes and additions of traits in the evaluation will not only strengthen our ability to better predict future progeny performance but, more importantly, better inform us earlier in life how to better mate these animals for future success.

Undoubtedly, there will be individual animals that will change, but it is important to note we have performed multiple analyses comparing the previous expected progeny differences (EPDs) to those coming from the new analyses; the correlations are very high.

We will be adding Sustained Cow Fertility (SCF) to the updated genetic evaluation as a predictor trait of a

female's ability to stay in the herd through the age of 12 (10 calvings after calving as a two-year-old heifer). This trait is built through Whole Herd Total Performance Reporting (TPR™). We have amassed well over a million records since the inception of Whole Herd TPR in 2001, but because of the lack of females that have been genotyped to this point, we are unable to include the genomic component in the SCF evaluation at this time.

Moving forward there needs to be a concerted effort in collecting female genotypes to better predict not only SCF but all female traits as well. In order to accomplish this, two things must happen:

You must be willing to embrace the genomic technology and to realize the progress that can be made when you have your entire cow herd genotyped.

The price needs to be lucrative enough to warrant testing all females in your herd. I can't make the first decision for you, but what I can guarantee is the AHA Board of Directors and staff are committed to giving you the most competitive DNA price on the market.

Because of our continued collaboration with GeneSeek, we are initiating a limited time, special project price of \$20 per female to get your cow herd genotyped. For \$20 you will be able to get parentage, a genomic profile and the abnormalities results along with a complimentary Tissue Sampling Unit (TSU).

Yes, that's right. What used to cost \$55 will now cost \$20 to allow you to advance your herd. This project will be only for females on your cow herd inventory, and you must commit to genotyping all females on this list.

Additionally, all samples will need to be submitted via a TSU. Look for additional updates on the specifics of this exciting project and how to participate. **HW**