



The Best of Both Worlds

The American Hereford Association and the Red Angus Association of America partner to launch the Premium Red Baldy Program.

by *Kayla Jennings*

For the first time, two leading cattle breed associations have united to develop a genetically verified female program to meet the needs of the commercial cattleman. During the Red Reception on Feb. 1, 2018, at the National Cattleman's Beef Association (NCBA) conference in Phoenix, the American Hereford Association (AHA) and the Red Angus Association of America (RAAA) announced the new Premium Red Baldy Program.

"This is a ground breaking, innovative program designed for the commercial cattleman in the United States, combining the best of two breeds in the Red Angus and the Hereford," says Gary Fike, RAAA director of commercial marketing.

RAAA CEO Tom Brink says a trend in today's industry is genetic verification of commercial cattle, and the overarching goal with this program is to facilitate that in the commercial sector. After a year and a half of planning, the associations are proud to work together to fill this niche for producers.

The tagging program is designed to maximize heterosis by combining the best traits of two breeds. By combining the only two breeds backed by whole herd reporting, the mating is certain to develop a genetically verified female, which combines the ideal balance of maternal and carcass traits. The hope is these females will begin to receive a premium in the marketplace.

"AHA is honored to join Red Angus to introduce the Premium Red Baldy Program that identifies genetically superior F-1 females," says Jack Ward, AHA executive vice president. "The AHA and RAAA are the only two breed associations that implement a mandatory whole herd reporting performance program, which gives strength and reliability to their respective genetic evaluations."

The logistics

In the early stages of this program, Ward says both associations were seeking to develop something "better than average." With that in mind, they developed the program

to require all animals to be in the top half of the breed.

Ward says the list of requirements is quite simple. The sire must be in the top 50% of his respective breed in the Baldy Maternal Index (BMI\$) for Hereford and the Herd Builder (HB) index for Red Angus. BMI\$ and HB are both maternal indexes created to provide producers a tool to multi-trait select for higher-quality cattle. Additionally, the target breed percentages will range from 25% to 75%, with the balance being the alternate breed.



RAAA CEO Tom Brink says this program fills a need for higher-quality females in the commercial industry.

Producers interested in verifying their bull battery should call their respective breed representative to complete the verification process and to order Allflex tags for \$0.99 each. Interested breeders will contact Trey Befort, AHA director of commercial programs, at tbefort@herefordbeef.org or Chessie Mitchell, RAAA tag program coordinator, at chessie@redangus.org. Breeders will have to provide registration numbers at that time.

Upon completion of the phone interview, tags will be shipped to the producer. Only enough tags to match the number of red-bodied and white- or brockle-faced females born on the operation will be shipped. It is also important to note Premium Red Baldy is not a Process Verified Program (PVP) through the United States Department of Agriculture.

As a whole, Ward hopes this program creates a “trickle-up” within the industry, where seedstock producers feel the pressure to breed genetically superior cattle in order to be a part of the program.

“We are very excited about this program,” he says. “I do believe it is one of a kind within the industry. We don’t know where this is going to go, but we are excited about the opportunities moving forward.”

For the producer

The inception of the new program has garnered attention amongst seedstock and commercial breeders alike. Wade Perks, Rockford, Ill., has been in the Hereford business his whole life, and his family raised

Red Angus for a number of years, as well. He was in attendance at the Red Reception and says it was great to see the co-mingling of breeders across the two associations and the commercial side.

“I was excited to see the cross conversations happening between breeds at the end of the press conference,” he says. “Those conversations broaden the network and increase quality in both breeds. I was even more excited to see the excitement from the commercial cattlemen, because this program truly benefits them more than anything.”

Much like Ward’s trickle up theory, Perks describes the benefits in a pyramid. At the top is the commercial cattleman seeking quality genetics based on indexes. This program limits single-trait selection, so seedstock producers are not chasing a single trait but instead are focusing on the big picture in creating these females. The secondary recipients of value are the Hereford and Red Angus breeders.

“The expectations prompt Hereford and Red Angus breeders to develop higher quality cattle,” he explains.

As well as raising cattle his entire life, Parks noted that his in-laws raise Hereford cattle in San Angelo, Texas. They collectively sell a couple of hundred bulls each year, and he says they are all excited about the opportunity for the program to benefit Hereford breeders specifically. “I think this is another tool in the toolbox to market white faced cattle,” Perks notes. “The increase in white face cattle benefits all Hereford breeders.”



AHA Executive Vice President Jack Ward says he hopes this program creates a “trickle-up” effect within the industry, where seedstock producers feel the pressure to breed genetically superior cattle.

Stepping back to view the big picture, Perks says there is a lot of synergy between the two breeds. The mating will truly develop a sought after, quality female.

“We will not only see the advantages of heterosis, but it will provide the opportunity for the strong points of each breed to be prevalent in the offspring,” he explains. “I expect qualifying females to be fertile, easy doing, and highly maternal. That’s something commercial cattlemen can count on and will have a direct impact on their bottom line.”

At the end of the day, Brinks says it is definitely newsworthy when two different breed associations work together for the betterment of the commercial industry. Both associations have a long history of caring about the commercial producer and orienting the breeding programs, genetics and various marketing efforts around serving the commercial producer. The Premium Red Baldy Program is an extension of those efforts and a big part of the AHA strategic plan to partner with others to increase quality genetics.

“This program brings a female loaded with hybrid vigor, who is workable in many different environments, and a female that is going to last a long time,” Brink notes. “It creates a female that could be bred a number of different ways and do a very good job. She brings the best of two breeds that offer a lot of maternal traits and otherwise to the industry, and that is what this program is all about.” **HW**



The Red Baldy Premium Program garnered attention amongst seedstock and commercial breeders at the Red Reception.