

Commercial Connection | Seize the Advantage

by **Trey Befort** | Introducing the inaugural Commercial Connection column, which will run in each tabloid issue to share opportunities for both seedstock and commercial producers.

It is hard to believe I have been in this role for five years now. As I look back on the places where I have traveled and the people I have met, I quickly realize how truly blessed I am to have the privilege to serve a great breed with such great opportunity. In upcoming Commercial Connection columns, I will be focusing on various topics that both seedstock and commercial producers can take into consideration, such as the increasing number of value-added programs in the marketplace, various emerging technologies, and commercial programs and tools developed by the American Hereford Association (AHA), just to name a few. My hope is these topics will engage producers to become more aware of and more involved with the numerous opportunities to add value and to improve the quality of their operations.

Summer recap

This summer I had the privilege to represent the AHA and *Certified Hereford Beef*® at several of the video auctions held across the country. From June through August, more than one million head of calves and feeders were marketed through these auctions, with most lots sold for fall delivery. Though the market was volatile, it seemed as if overall attitudes were optimistic throughout the summer. This optimism is a good testament to the continued growth in demand for U.S. beef.

At these sales, many of the local consignors gathered to watch their calf crops sell, to enjoy fellowship with neighbors who also were possibly selling and to partake in evening festivities the auction companies coordinated. I commend the Hereford breeders who attended these events and capitalized on the opportunity to promote their genetics and breeding programs to commercial producers.

These sales also present a wonderful opportunity for commercial producers to network and to build relationships with cattle feeders in attendance. Through those conversations, producers

can gain valuable insight as to what those buyers are looking for and might be able to earn another interested buyer when it comes time to market their calf crop. In the future, I would encourage all producers, both seedstock and commercial, to take advantage of these events and to put in a little extra effort to promote their programs. I firmly believe the added exposure and networking will be rewarding.

Fall marketing opportunities

Though many cattle were marketed through video auctions this summer, a significant volume of calves and feeders will be marketed in the next couple of months. For those producers looking for opportunities to add additional value, I will discuss a few options to consider. First and foremost are the commercial programs developed and managed by the AHA. **The Hereford Advantage, Maternal Advantage and Premium Red Baldy** (in conjunction with the Red Angus Association of America) programs are great tools to utilize for genetic improvement and marketing support.

These genetic-verification programs are based on the various profit indexes available through the AHA. Participating producers will receive a sire summary of the Hereford bull battery that sired the group of calves or feeders they plan to market. This summary includes an easy-to-read outline of the strengths and weaknesses within that group of bulls, allowing producers to make informed decisions when it comes time to cull and/or purchase additional Hereford bulls in the future. Additionally, these programs allow for added exposure in the marketplace and help give buyers confidence in the cattle they are purchasing, whether they be feeder cattle or replacement females. Regardless of the method in which producers market cattle – video, live auction or private treaty – these commercial programs are well worth taking advantage of. For additional

information or to get started with any of these programs, please visit Hereford.org/commercial.

Another consideration for producers marketing this fall is the various **Hereford-influenced feeder cattle sales** that have been coordinated around the country. These sales have proven to be a successful means for producers, large and small, to come together with other area producers to market Hereford-influenced feeder cattle in larger groups. Most of these sales have a required vaccination and weaning protocol that must be followed in order to participate, which is especially important to interested buyers as it gives them more confidence in purchasing those cattle. A list of upcoming sales through the end of the year is included at the bottom of the page.

One final consideration is **retained ownership through the finishing phase** rather than marketing calves or feeders. For most the thought of retained ownership can be intimidating. But for those producers who are confident in their genetics and the ability of their cattle to perform in the feedlot and on the rail, retained ownership can be a rewarding experience. With the various risks involved and the fluctuations in the market from year to year, I encourage interested producers to consult a few different cattle feeders that may be able to give them insight and direction. A relationship with a reputable cattle feeder is one of the most crucial components of retained ownership, as the cattle feeder will be caring for and marketing the cattle, along with communicating performance and carcass data back to producers. Several resources are available in the industry to help producers decide each year if it is more sensible to retain ownership or if it is more advantageous to sell cattle as calves or feeders.

Another noteworthy event related to retained ownership that wrapped up this summer was the **2018 National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Fed Steer**

Shootout. Nearly 150 steers from 37 NJHA members representing 13 states were fed at Gregory Feedlots in Tabor, Iowa, and harvested in a few groups throughout the summer. This year's winners have been determined and will be awarded at the AHA Annual Meeting Hereford Honorees Reception on Friday, Oct. 26, in Kansas City, Mo. I would like to congratulate these young people who took advantage of this program and, hopefully, gained invaluable experience to take with them as they develop into progressive cattlemen and cattlemen. For those producers, seedstock or commercial, who may not be able to retain ownership of an entire calf crop, I would encourage them to consider working with youth in their communities to participate with a sampling of their steers. This is a terrific opportunity to get a glimpse of their genetics at work, to gain an understanding of the risks and rewards associated with the cattle feeding process and to learn about different tools and technologies to help improve quality and profitability. The entry form and additional information about the contest can be found at Hereford.org/youth/njha-fed-steer-shootout.

There is a huge opportunity for the continued advancement of the Hereford breed in the commercial industry. In such a fast-paced and constantly changing marketplace, being complacent and unwilling to adopt new tools and technologies is a sure way to lose ground. The Hereford breed has done such a fantastic job of improving genetic quality and establishing a solid foundation in the commercial industry and now is not the time to let off the gas. Again, I challenge both seedstock and commercial producers to step outside their normal routine and to consider some of the opportunities discussed. **HW**

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Upcoming Hereford-influenced feeder calf sales

Tennessee Hereford Marketing Program Feeder Calf Sale

Date: Oct. 18, 2018

Location: Tennessee Livestock Producers, Columbia, Tenn.

Contact: Darrell Ailshie, 931-212-8512

Missouri Hereford Association Hereford-Influenced Feeder Calf Sale

Date: Nov. 14, 2018

Location: South Central Regional Stockyards, Vienna, Mo.

Contact: David Patton, 573-308-6655, Ross Patton, 573-308-6657 or Bill Patton, 573-308-6658

Montana Hereford Association Hereford-Influenced Feeder Calf Sale — Three Forks

Date: Nov. 14, 2018

Location: Headwaters Livestock Auction, Three Forks, Mont.

Contact: Della Ehlke, 406-439-4300 or Denise Loyning, 406-425-2252

Kentucky Certified Hereford-Influenced Sale

Date: Nov. 29, 2018

Location: Bluegrass Stockyards South, Stanford, Ky.

Contact: Lowell Atwood, 606-669-1455 or John Meents, 419-306-7480

Ohio River Hereford-Influenced Feeder Sale

Date: Dec. 5, 2018

Location: United Producers, Gallipolis, Ohio

Contact: Jamie Graham, 740-739-3576 or John Meents, 419-306-7480

Fredonia Livestock Hereford-Influenced Sale

Date: Dec. 11, 2018

Location: Fredonia Livestock Auction, Fredonia, Kan.

Contact: Cody Mathes, 620-288-0034 or Rodney Shaw, 620-583-9467

Greater Midwest Certified Hereford Feeder Calf Sale

Date: Jan. 1, 2019

Location: Carthage Livestock Auction, Carthage, Ill.

Contact: Brent Lowderman, 309-221-9621 or John Meents, 419-306-7480 **HW**