

by Trey Befort

# Maximize the Value of Your Cattle

As we begin a new year, I hope everyone had holidays blessed with plenty of time spent with family and friends. This is my favorite time of the year, and I think that it is a great time to sit back and to take a look at not only what we have experienced and accomplished over the past year but also what we can do to improve ourselves and our operations in the year to come.

## Certified Hereford Beef® specifications

An important part of being a progressive producer is having the willingness to adapt to changes and the open-mindedness to adopt new practices and technologies to set yourself apart and to improve the quality, efficiency and profitability of your cattle and your operation. One exciting change to mention is the quality grade improvement

modification made to the *Certified Hereford Beef* brand. Effective Jan. 1, 2019, *Certified Hereford Beef* carcasses will be required to have a Small<sup>00</sup> or higher marbling score, making all *Certified Hereford Beef* product grade United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Choice or higher. A comparison of the carcass specifications for the two *Certified Hereford Beef* programs can be found in Table 1.

The *Certified Hereford Beef* marbling score modification has several benefits to the brand and will create new opportunities for growth with a higher quality product. Approximately 80 percent of product going into the previous *Certified Hereford Beef* Classic program was USDA Choice or higher. Eliminating the approximately 20 percent of USDA Select product previously included in the *Certified*

*Hereford Beef* Classic program will provide a more consistent and higher-quality product for end users.

Increasing the quality standard of the *Certified Hereford Beef* product will also allow the brand to be more competitive in a marketplace that continues to demand a superior product. Another benefit of this change is the elimination of brand confusion of being a “non-graded” product. This misconception resulted from the absence of a specific USDA quality grade on product sold through the previous Select/Choice blended Classic program.

Most importantly, this modification will drive the demand for higher-quality Hereford and Hereford-influenced cattle. With the continued growth in demand for a high-quality *Certified Hereford Beef* product, additional opportunities will arise

for premiums paid to cattlemen, rewarding those who produce top-quality cattle to supply the brand.

## Balanced approach

Setting a higher standard for marbling in the *Certified Hereford Beef* brand will be an added attribute to complement the existing efficiency and maternal advantages of the Hereford breed. I recommend producers avoid “tunnel vision” and strictly selecting for marbling but, instead, take a balanced approach to improve the genetic merit of their herds. The commercial programs offered by the American Hereford Association (AHA) are great tools to do so and have been discussed in previous issues of the *Hereford World*.

Many Hereford breeders have started to include the commercial program logos on bulls that meet program requirements. Table 2 briefly reviews and outlines the different programs and the associated profit index requirements for each. By participating in these programs, producers receive a sire summary generated specifically for their bull battery. With this sire summary, producers are able to quickly see the strengths and weaknesses of their bull battery, allowing them to make educated selection and culling decisions before the next breeding season. Refer to the image below for an example of the sire summary generated through all of the AHA commercial programs.

As we come into the early spring when many bulls will be available for purchase, this is a great time for producers to evaluate their bull battery information to see what area(s) they may need to focus on when purchasing bulls. Though many producers market their calf crop as weaned calves or yearlings — and do not retain ownership of those animals through the finishing phase — I believe it is still a responsibility of all cattlemen to produce the highest quality product possible to pass along to the next segment of the industry. By putting added focus on carcass traits, such as marbling, producers may gain additional buyer interest and repeat buyers who have added confidence in genetics that have proven to perform in the feedyard and at the packer level. I strongly encourage producers utilizing Hereford bulls in their operation to take advantage of the commercial programs discussed as we near bull sale season.

For those interested in participating in and taking advantage of the commercial programs listed above, visit the “Commercial” page at [Hereford.org](http://Hereford.org) for more information or contact Trey Befort. **HW**

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**Table 1: Certified Hereford Beef carcass specifications**

CHB Choice	CHB Premium
Small <sup>00</sup> or higher marbling score	Modest <sup>00</sup> or higher marbling score
Less than 30 months – A maturity	
Medium or fine marbling texture	
Ribeye Area (REA) of 10.0 to 16.0 in <sup>2</sup>	
Hot Carcass Weight (HCW) of 1,050 lb. or less	
Fat Thickness (FT) less than 1.0 inch	
Moderately thick or thicker muscling	
Rhomboideus muscle (hump) shall not exceed 2 inches in height	
Free of “dark cutting” characteristics	
Practically free of capillary rupture in the ribeye muscle	

**Table 2: AHA commercial programs overview**

Program	Program logo	Index used
Hereford Advantage		\$CHB
Maternal Advantage		\$BMI or \$BII
Premium Red Baldy		\$BMI or HerdBuilder (Red Angus)

\*\*For all programs, bulls must have transferred ownership and rank in the top 50% of the breed for the respective index.

## Sire summary example

