



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kendra Davis, kdavis@hereford.org

Feb. 5, 2019

Value and demand for Hereford genetics showcased at the 2019 Cattle Industry Convention

NEW ORLEANS — The American Hereford Association (AHA) continues to leverage the breed’s strengths to meet the needs of every component of the beef supply chain.

AHA team members shared the proactive efforts the Association is taking to position the breed in the marketplace at a media briefing held Jan. 31 during the 2019 Cattle Industry Convention and National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) Trade Show in New Orleans.

“The Hereford breed continues to strategically strengthen our position by focusing on all industry segments,” said AHA Executive Vice President Jack Ward. “We are totally committed to the beef cattle industry.”

In response to consumer demand for higher quality beef, the Certified Hereford Beef® brand upgraded its minimum marbling specification from a Slight⁰⁰ to a Small⁰⁰, effective Jan. 1, 2019. The brand now provides a USDA Choice and higher product offering in retail and foodservice markets.

Due to focus and dedication to breed improvement, *Certified Hereford Beef* qualifying carcasses are grading over 80 percent USDA Choice and higher — a nearly twofold increase since the establishment of the *Certified Hereford Beef* brand in 1995. With high-quality genetics available to back demand for high-quality cattle, the brand launched its Premium program in January 2017, which requires an upper two-thirds USDA Choice and higher quality grade. The fastest growing program under the brand, the *Certified Hereford Beef* Premium program has solidified the value of Hereford genetics in the higher-quality market. Additionally, *Certified Hereford Beef* continues to tap into value-added products, garnering further brand recognition and growth.

“The growth and development of *Certified Hereford Beef* in the marketplace has and will continue to create opportunities for producers to realize premiums for cattle meeting brand specifications,” said Trey Befort, AHA director of commercial programs. “At the end of the day, the purpose of the *Certified Hereford Beef* brand is to add value to Hereford genetics and to create additional demand for the breed while providing quality beef to consumers and their families.”

Recognizing the need for high-quality cattle in the marketplace, the AHA continues to advance the genetic merit of the breed. Last year’s genetic evaluation overhaul implemented a single-step marker effects model utilizing BOLT technology, a system which simultaneously analyzes pedigrees, phenotypes and genotypes and allows for a fully automated, weekly genetic evaluation. The overhaul is equipped with a genomic pipeline to provide quality control of the 70,000 genotypes entering the evaluation.

Another change to the genetic evaluation was the adoption of the North American Hereford Genetic Evaluation, which merges data from the AHA and the Canadian Hereford Association. All data are totally supported by the AHA Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program, ensuring an unbiased data set.

“Our breeders are getting the most up-to-date, relevant information to make the most informed decisions possible,” said Shane Bedwell, AHA chief operating officer and director of breed improvement.

In collaboration with Neogen® and Allflex®, the AHA launched the Whole Herd DNA Cow Herd project in 2018 to incorporate more female genotypes into the updated genetic evaluation. Nearly 10,000 genotypes were collected through the project and plans are underway to incorporate the recently introduced Sustained Cow Fertility (SCF) trait, as well as other maternal traits, into the marker effects model.

The National Reference Sire Program (NRSP) continues to grow and add value to Hereford genetics. The NRSP allows for unbiased, third-party data from large contemporary groups and supplies the majority of the economically relevant traits to the AHA’s genetic evaluation. Last year, more than 3,500 females were exposed to Hereford bulls through the program. There are seven test herds located throughout the U.S., three of which were added in 2018. Since inception, the program has tested 375 sires for progeny data from birth to harvest, and last year’s data highlighted the progress the breed has made in terms of marbling and feed conversion.

“It’s exciting what can happen with genetic progress when you apply selection pressure,” Bedwell said. “The advantage Hereford has that we all know about is fertility, docility, efficiency and longevity, and how that can work in different cow herds across the nation. We have been able to take this message and apply it to our commercial programs.”

As well, commercial opportunities for Hereford-influenced genetics continue to increase. Backed by the Baldy Maternal (BMIS) and Brahman Influence (BIIS) indices, the Premium Red Baldy and Maternal Advantage programs have been successful in their first year in extending the benefits Hereford genetics provide from a maternal standpoint. Along with maternal-focused commercial programs, the Hereford Advantage program, backed by the Certified Hereford Beef index (CHBS), is growing and adding value to high-quality Hereford-influenced feeder cattle.

With \$170,000 awarded in scholarships, Hereford youth also saw a huge year in 2018. The AHA is committed to encouraging youth to stay involved in the industry so they continue to advance the breed and become spokespeople of the industry. In its second year, the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Fed Steer Shootout program doubled in size and awarded \$10,000 in prize money to junior participants. BioZyme Inc. joined the cause, pledging \$30,000 to support the 2019 contest as part of VitaFerm’s® Feed the Future program. Boasting a 38 percent growth in entries, the third year of the Fed Steer Shootout program is underway, with 206 steers currently on feed at Gregory Feedlots, Tabor, Iowa, from 67 junior members representing 15 states.

Looking ahead, the AHA has exciting things in store for 2019. The Association recently updated its virtual registration system, MyHerd, to feature a modern, user-friendly design that is compatible with mobile website browsers.

The AHA is also working with Neogen to develop a Hereford commercial genomic panel. The purpose of the panel is to create a tool within the industry to leverage the data generated through the growing NRSP, ultimately adding value and strength to Hereford genetics in both the seedstock and commercial industries.

Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI) is set to rollout Herefords on Demand, an online production catalog builder, to help members take advantage of AHA programs to better market their products. The new platform allows users to develop and post a catalog on the AHA website, where expected progeny differences (EPDs) in the digital versions can update along with the weekly genetic evaluations. Herefords on Demand also allows anyone to search for specific criteria within an individual catalog as well as across all catalogs in the system.

“We wanted to produce something that is beneficial to our breeders,” Ward said. “This is a one-stop shop and a great opportunity for breeders of any size to take advantage of, whether they have 10 heifer calves to sell in the fall or 100 bulls to sell in the spring.”

With the addition of this new tool and expanding marketing avenues, the AHA will host “The Brand” Marketing Summit June 3-4 in Kansas City, Mo., to help breeders navigate the modern marketplace. The event will provide insight as to how breeders can develop a personable, consistent message and how to use contemporary marketing tools to make that message resonate in the marketplace.

###

The American Hereford Association (AHA), with headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., is one of the largest U.S. beef breed associations. The not-for-profit organization along with its subsidiaries — Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC, Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI) and American Beef Records Association (ABRA) — provides programs and services for its members and their customers, while promoting the Hereford breed and supporting education, youth and research. For more information about the Association, visit Hereford.org.