

# Seedstock Marketing From a Producer's Perspective

South Dakota breeder Nate Frederickson shares his tactics for marketing and offering service to cattle customers.

by *Kindra Gordon*



Frederickson Ranch is a family effort. Pictured (l to r) are: Nate, Teegan, Jayna and Tiernan, and Nate's parents, Mary Kay and Mark.

“**W**ork your tail off and take care of your customer.” That’s the advice Hereford breeder Nate Frederickson, Spearfish, S.D., offers to others seeking success and longevity in the seedstock business.

Nate, along with his wife, Jayna, two young sons, Teegan and Tiernan, and his parents, Mark and Mary Kay, run more than 500 cows. The herd is comprised of registered Hereford and Angus as well as commercial cows, which are used in an embryo transfer (ET) program.

Today, Frederickson Ranch markets bulls through a private limited liability company called Pyramid Beef, which was established in 2009 as a marketing outlet for the ranch’s bulls and commercial females. Pyramid Beef partners with Belle Fourche, S.D., cattleman Jason McLennan and markets 150 bulls a year through an annual production sale hosted at the bull development



Natives to Minnesota, the Fredericksons planted roots in Spearfish, S.D., in the early 2000s, where they run more than 500 registered and commercial Hereford and Angus cows.

center on the Frederickson Ranch in South Dakota's picturesque northern Black Hills.

### From Minnesota to South Dakota

It's a family effort that came together "with a lot of luck and fate," Nate explains of their ranch operation today. The Fredericksons' roots began near Starbuck, Minn., where Nate and his sister, Sarah, grew up raising and showing Herefords. At the time Mark and Mary Kay ran 150 cows and marketed about 20 Hereford and Angus bulls annually.

As a young adult, Nate moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota in 2002 for a job opportunity in the animal health industry. "My plan was to work in pharmaceutical sales for five or six years and then move back to the family farm in Minnesota," he says.

But plans changed during those years, as Nate's younger sister also moved west to Wyoming and Nate married Jayna, who had roots in the Black Hills area. Nate and Jayna built a house, began to grow their cow herd and in 2009 held their first production sale. Thus, in 2011 Mark and Mary Kay left Minnesota and made the move to Spearfish, S.D.

The Fredericksons were able to acquire a sizeable amount of land 10 miles west of Spearfish along the Wyoming border. Mark and Mary Kay renovated an existing house on the property; Nate and Jayna sold their existing home and property and built a home about one mile from Mark and Mary Kay.

"It all kind of fell together," Nate says of the transitions the family has made over the past decade. He adds, "We now have a home place that allowed us to grow our herd and to build a cattle development center — including calving pens, feeding pens and a large shed where our annual sale is held."

### Marketing key

Through the journey of relocating and growing his seedstock business, Nate has recognized marketing efforts are key. "Raising quality seedstock cattle is only part of the equation. Marketing and direct



To help build strong customer relationships, Frederickson bulls are sold with both an unconditional guarantee and an injury guarantee and are delivered free of charge within 300 miles.

customer relationships are what contribute to success," he notes.

Utilizing artificial insemination (AI) and ET to produce top-quality genetics has been foundational to the Fredericksons' seedstock operation, as has using a complete herd health program and offering both an unconditional guarantee and an injury guarantee on bulls sold. Marketing efforts include a detailed sale catalog along with online video footage of each animal in the sale, a Facebook presence and online bidding on sale day via The Livestock Link. They also deliver bulls free of charge within 300 miles and offer a nominal discount to those who haul their own bulls home on sale day.

Specifically, Nate also strives to build one-on-one relationships with his bull and female buying customers and often contacts them a few times throughout the year. "We try to visit their place, see their cow herd and link them with potential calf buyers when we can," he explains.

Through his 14 years working in the animal health industry, Nate recognized the value of building relationships and has many industry contacts with whom he can connect his customers.

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Approximately 150 bulls are marketed through the Pyramid Beef annual production sale at the bull development center housed on Frederickson Ranch.

“I strive to bridge the communication gap between buyers and sellers,” he says.

He acknowledges building those networks and relationships takes time, but his passion for the cattle business and the people in the industry make the time spent worthwhile.

In addition to involvement with his customers, Nate is a believer in industry involvement. He has been involved with both the South Dakota Hereford Association and the American Hereford Association (AHA), and his young sons attended their first Junior National Hereford Expo in Grand Island, Neb., in 2018 — as well as showing at their county fair and the South Dakota State Fair.

Looking ahead, Nate sees genomic testing becoming more important to his operation and the industry. He currently tests some of the bulls

he markets, and as customer interest in data grows, he will explore expanding the number of animals tested.

Ultimately, Frederickson Ranch will continue to provide its customers efficient, low-maintenance genetics along with exceptional customer service and avenues to help them add value to their bottom line. “Everything I do has to have a return, and I know my customers do, too,” Nate says.

As a member of the AHA Board of Directors, he is excited for the future of the breed. “Hereford is the breed I grew up with. The breed has a great group of people and a tremendous junior program; and Hereford cattle have a big future as we see the increasing demand for heterosis. Herefords are a key step to meeting that demand,” he concludes. **HW**

## From the auction block

Livestock auctioneer Seth Weishaar has witnessed the seedstock marketing business from the auction block for more than two decades. What is the secret to those seedstock operations that stand out? The Belle Fourche, South Dakota-based auctioneer says, “People who take care of their customers stay in business.”

Weishaar acknowledges that in the seedstock industry: “There is more competition for business today.” As a result, he has seen many seedstock breeders step up to offer more service and quality to their customers. “Some breeders are buying back customer’s calves or helping them find a market for them,” he says. “The guarantees of standing behind the seedstock cattle being sold have gotten stronger. And, more seedstock breeders are visiting their customers and building relationships.”

Genetics have also advanced. Weishaar believes there is more use of artificial insemination and top-quality genetics. Fifteen years ago you hardly saw a 600-pound calf in October,” he shares. Now, that’s common and often without growth implants and without increasing cow size beyond 1,200 or 1,300 pounds.”

He adds, “About the time you say a record can’t be broken, someone does. So who knows, in the future with improved genetics we might be seeing more 700-pound calves in October.”

Weishaar notes he is also encouraged by the influx of more young people coming into beef production either as seedstock or commercial producers.

Regarding marketing, he sees social media and internet campaigns being integrated with print and radio ads but

concludes, “A one-on-one relationship with customers is still stronger than any of those tools.”

## High on Hereford

Weishaar’s dad, Lynn, a successful, well-known livestock auctioneer since the 1970s, has seen and sold cattle of all breeds and types. But on his ranch near Reva, S.D., the commercial cattleman has chosen to run Hereford bulls on his black cow herd. Of this combination, Lynn Weishaar says, “I like the black baldy calf, and we especially get a huge premium for our baldy heifers because people want them.

“Herefords help produce good sound cattle that are useful, easy keeping, have a good disposition and longevity,” he adds. **HW**

