

Defining Distinction

Look ahead with excitement as we commend the best of the breed.



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The following are Merriam-Webster definitions for “distinction” (dis-tinc-tion):

- a) The quality or state of being excellent or superior
- b) Special honor or recognition
- c) An accomplishment that sets one apart

Synonyms include:

- a) Excellence
- b) Greatness
- c) Superiority

In this issue of the *Hereford World*, you will find the updated list of American Hereford Association Dams of Distinction (DOD) and Sires of Distinction (SOD). Producers can be proud of breeding and owning animals making this list. As Webster defines them, these superior animals are set apart with special recognition.

Making a mark

This year will certainly define Hereford as the breed of choice to build a commercial cow herd. As cattlemen have made their way through one of the toughest winters in decades, cows needed to be equipped to handle some very taxing environments. Obviously, producers spend substantial time determining the genetics needed to produce an animal with growth and efficiency in the feedlot, which ultimately produces a high-quality and high-yielding carcass offering the taste and tenderness consumers demand. But it all starts with a female that withstands a variety of environments, that gets bred consistently and that raises a calf performing better than its contemporaries.

Over the years, I have been asked what type of expected progeny

difference (EPD) trait profile it takes to produce a DOD or SOD. The answer to that question is unique to every member, but the simple answer which applies to everyone is the cows will tell you.

It is not always those dams and sires with the most extreme sets of figures that make it on these distinguished lists. Rather, the right combination of traits sets these animals apart — and as soon as you find the right combination, you need to propagate those animals as much as possible. For instance, some areas can handle more mature size with an abundance of milk, but many environments cannot take those genetics and sustain them. Breeders need to remember there are always antagonisms associated with each trait of interest and selecting for “more” is not always going to make you or your customers profitable. Certainly, push your environment, but be sure your environment mirrors that of your customers as much as possible.

It has been an interesting and difficult winter across most of the country. If cattlemen were not fighting snow and ice, they were fighting rain and mud. The resilience of cattlemen is amazing, and it is obvious the heart and effort each of you puts forth in moving forward and producing a wholesome product for a growing world population.

As you receive this issue of the *Hereford World*, I hope you have seen more favorable weather conditions and, hopefully, the grass is growing. I know at our house Mary Ann and I will both be happy to see warmer and more peaceful weather. Congratulations to all of those with a cow or a bull recognized as a DOD or SOD. This honor truly is the state of being excellent. **HW**