

Mastering the Keyboard

Pursuing quality and tackling challenges require a musical approach.



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When this issue went to press mid-March, many parts of the country were dealing with severe weather. The staff at the American Hereford Association send our thoughts and prayers to everyone affected by those storms, and we hope you, your family and your herd stayed safe in those adverse conditions.

With April upon us, the peak of bull season is tailing off, and plans for marketing this year's calf crop are underway. Marketing has never been a mindless task, and a challenge unique to the present is the extensive number of communication outlets available for interacting with clients. There are limitless questions to ask when coming up with a marketing plan: What form of advertising appeals most to my customer base? Which publications or websites should I advertise through? What is all this obsession over social media and how in the world can I use it to market my business?

If you are like me, it is daunting to establish a game plan when faced with copious options. Many of my mentors have advised, "Just dive in." But even that requires some forward thinking — you have to make sure the water is deep enough before jumping in just anywhere. Instead of blindly diving into a task, I like to use a strategy I learned from playing piano: Learn the song one note at a time.

Note by note

I am no musical genius and was not blessed with the ability to memorize a song after a couple of run-throughs. In order to master a piece, I need to establish my fundamentals. I start by listening to another pianist's rendition of the piece to get a feel for the melody, tone and tempo.

Then I lay the foundation: I go through the score one hand at a time, marking the sheets with a pencil with the fingering needed for a seamless transition from note to note. By the

time I combine my right and left hands, muscle memory kicks in, and I focus on pacing at the right beats per minute with the correct sound dynamics. Oh, yes, and somewhere in the mix, I fine-tune using the foot pedal.

It takes hours and hours of consistent practice, but in the end I am rewarded with a sound almost resembling what I hear on the radio. This strategy of slowly building a solid foundation and adding to it little by little is a concept I apply to everything. Whether building your marketing plan, selecting replacements or planting crops, it is important to remember a quality end product takes time to come by — minor, intentional adjustments eventually metamorphize into a successful operation.

In this issue

In the April *Hereford World*, we recognize the exceptional dams of the Hereford breed and the sires who produce those females. See Page 26 for the list of breeders recognized for their Dams of Distinction and Page 32 for the Sires of Distinction. I think it safe to wager breeders of these quality animals did not establish their superior breeding programs overnight — decades of minor adjustments and diligent selection have and will continue to propel these operations forward.

Other features include tips for matching your cow herd to your environment (Page 36) and factors influencing fertility in females (Page 42). Glean insight into the latest trends in the beef industry on Page 50 and turn to Page 56 for a recap of the 2019 CattleFax market and weather outlook presented at the Cattle Industry Convention and NCBA Trade Show earlier this year. Finally, see Page 62 for the full rundown on the Fort Worth Stock Show.

On behalf of the entire Hereford Publications Inc. (HPI) staff, we hope you enjoy this issue. May your spring be bright and your smile brighter. **HW**