

# Our Breed, OUR BRAND

**'The Brand' Marketing Summit  
unites Hereford breeders for a shared  
cause — promoting the Hereford brand.**

by Diane Meyer

**I**t is no secret Hereford cattle offer many sought-after traits in the cattle industry, but these advantages can be easily dismissed without an effective marketing approach.

Amidst the who, what, when, where and why's of marketing looms the "how." How can Hereford producers share their message with fellow cattlemen, feedlots and, ultimately, consumers? How can they strengthen and better position the Hereford breed?

With these challenges in mind, the American Hereford Association (AHA) and Vermeer Corporation hosted "The Brand" Marketing Summit to help producers build and grow their marketing strategies. This first-of-its-kind event, featuring



**"Team Hereford is all of us breeders, all working together, with a common goal of promoting Herefords and then, hopefully, promoting our own brand."**

**PETE ATKINS**  
AHA president  
Atkins Herefords, Tea, S.D.

professionals representing all sectors of the cattle industry, brought together more than 200 Hereford enthusiasts from the U.S. and Canada to Kansas City, Mo., June 3-4.

At the conference, attendees learned how to balance traditional and digital platforms to connect with current and potential customers. Most importantly, participants walked away with a renewed sense of pride in promoting the Hereford breed.

"This marketing summit has really brought all the Hereford

breeders together, and got them under the same roof thinking about the same things and sharing the same message about the Hereford breed," says Kendra Davis, AHA director of communications and public relations. "We are all able to come together for the common good of making the entire breed better and, in turn, making the beef industry a better thing as well."

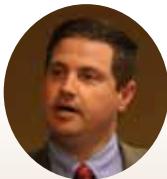
Please enjoy the following recap of this phenomenal event.

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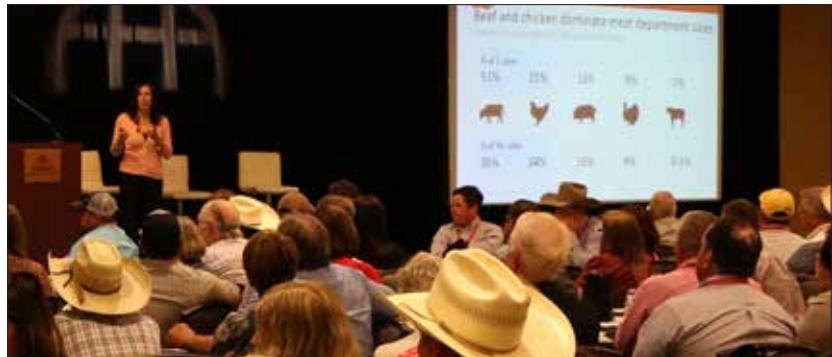
AHA President Pete Atkins welcomes attendees to The Brand on Monday afternoon to set the stage for the event.

# DAY 1: Charting a Course



**“If we can harness all of this energy and harness all of the knowledge and then go apply it through these different producers’ businesses and how they market Hereford genetics, we can make a sizable footprint on the industry.”**

**SHANE BEDWELL**  
AHA COO and director  
of breed improvement



Anne-Marie Roerink shared the power beef holds in the retail industry. “Retailers love meat, and beef drives a lot of that dollar.”

## THE HEREFORD BRAND

Although every Hereford operation is unique, each one provides a common product — Hereford genetics. The key to marketing any commodity or service is to promote its value in terms of strengths, efficiencies and differentiation. To spearhead the conference, attendees were given a comprehensive overview of the breed in order to advocate the Hereford brand in their individual marketing plans.

Presenter Shane Bedwell, AHA chief operating officer and director of breed improvement, highlighted the breed's marked advantage in efficiency, maternal heterosis and end-product merit.

“Whether with our own membership, our customer base, commercial cattlemen or the consumer, we have to be able to stay in front and continue to tell the message we have,” Bedwell says. “The day that we stop is the day that we become complacent.”



Bedwell guided attendees through marketable traits and growth trends within the breed, emphasizing Hereford's documented feed efficiency, fertility and longevity — strengths that all increase profitability.

## THE POWER OF MEAT

The beef industry is a complex system, shaped by multiple levels of production yet driven by one — the consumer. In an insightful presentation, Anne-Marie Roerink, principal at 210 Analytics, LLC, shared her research on the wants and needs of grocery shoppers in a one-size-fits-no-one world.

Ultimately, the direction of the beef industry is determined by consumer preferences, and beef's identity as a top protein source is dependent upon producers meeting consumer demands.

“Fifteen years ago, Millennials were in the very beginning of their family and independent living and now they are the biggest buying generation, so it definitely affects how people need to merchandise,” Roerink says. “But if you go to most grocery stores, the meat case today still looks exactly the way it looked 15 years ago. One of the main things we try to interact with folks on is

**“I think the key takeaway is to stay informed in order to be able to arm your customers with the most knowledge and the most vital information to help them produce the best product. That way it keeps us all in the business, and it keeps beef at the center of the plate.”**

**TERRI BARBER**  
Barber Ranch  
Channing, Texas

to keep in mind your shopper has changed... From producers on down the line all the way to what you see in the meat department has to change accordingly to make sure we meet the wants and needs of the consumer.”

## ESTABLISH YOUR ‘TRUE NORTH’

Once the direction of the breed and the industry was identified, it was time to hone in on the direction of each operation. To wrap up afternoon sessions, Mark Core led participants through a series of exercises to establish their “True North” — the ideal, or state of perfection, a business should strive toward.

A Truth North directional compass serves as a reference tool to base every management and investment decision and to provide context for all marketing content. To establish their directional compass, breeders brainstormed



Mark Core's mantra of finding your True North helped attendees in focusing their marketing efforts to meet their operational goals.



**“Every geographic area is different. Finding our compass is something that’s very important for all of us to do. Conferences like this are fantastic for getting us all together because it helps us to develop one voice and it makes our breed stronger.”**

**DANA PIEPER**  
Pieper Land and Cattle Co.  
Zurich, Kan.

and identified their business' internal and external strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, and customer personas.

“You have got to be known for something that’s better than anybody

else can do,” Core says. “And you will get the customers you need based on your target... The idea is to be able to separate you from the crowd.”

### INSTANT VIDEOGRAPHERS

Following Monday's sessions, guests gathered at the AHA headquarters for an evening social. While enjoying a delicious short rib dinner, catered by Valley Oaks, Oak Grove, Mo., attendees made a go at recording promotional videos to share on their social media accounts.

Facilitated by Vermeer staff, the activity allowed participants to record a short video describing their respective operations and then to upload the video to a social media channel. The exercise demonstrated firsthand the

ease of using simple digital tools to create an instant, marketable message.

“The Hereford Brand summit was a great learning experience for me and especially the video activity,” says Bruce Everhart, Everhart Herefords, Waldron, Ind. “We were asked to shoot a quick video introducing our herd and history and then post this on Facebook. While I was nervous about the video, I was amazed at how well it was received and the comments that were made. What I learned was people want to hear your message about your herd of Hereford cattle. [I look] forward to more opportunities to tell our Hereford story.



The Brand was not only about hearing from the best in the business, but also practicing what they were preaching. Attendees recorded short videos during the Monday evening activity to share on social platforms.

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## Special live auction raises nearly \$50,000

In true Team Hereford fashion, supporters of the breed banded together to raise \$47,350 to benefit the Hereford Youth Foundation of America (HYFA) and the Hereford Research Foundation (HRF).

“Timeless,” a graphite original drawing done by acclaimed artist Dino Cornay, headlined the special live auction held June 3 at Howl at the Moon in downtown Kansas City, Mo., in conjunction with “The Brand” Marketing Summit. As auctioneer Lander Nicodemus led the chant, buyers Barber Ranch, Channing, Texas; Bill King Ranch, Moriarty, N.M.; Colyer Herefords & Angus, Bruneau, Idaho; and Cottonwood Springs, Cedar, Mich., teamed up to place the winning bid for \$27,000. The syndicate graciously donated the drawing to be hung in the American Hereford Association (AHA) headquarters in Kansas City.

Cornay, who traveled from his hometown of Folsom, N.M., to be present for the auction, was humbled at the enthusiasm shown for the drawing and for the cause.

“I am extremely honored to be the artist selected for this project portraying a great breed of cattle and to have worked with some fabulous people, including the directors and those that purchased the art,” Cornay says. “It is also an honor to be part of a great scholarship program for our young leaders and to have the original drawing hanging at the national Hereford headquarters in Kansas City.”

Lots 2 and 3, two giclées of the original, found homes with EE Ranches, Dallas, and Flying S Herefords, Dallas. Circle H Herefords,



Dalhart, Texas, claimed Lot 3A, the number one print from the limited edition of the original.

Other items sold were two director's chairs donated by Classic Leather Designs and purchased by Everhart Farms, Waldron, Ind., and Holden Herefords, Valier, Mont.; two AHA branded hides purchased by Olsen Ranches, Harrisburg, Neb., and Mohican Polled Hereford Farms, Glenmont, Ohio; and an AHA branding iron purchased by Dudley Bros. Herefords, Comanche, Texas.

“The support of our breeders to continue educational, leadership, scholarship and research opportunities for Hereford youth was once again highlighted,” says Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities. “Please help us in saying thank you to those who bid and purchased to allow future generations to uphold the tradition of the Hereford brand.” **HW**

# DAY 2: Building a Tool Kit



A Kansas native, Mitch Holthus unites the Chiefs Kingdom by describing Kansas City as “the middle of everything” — not “the middle of nowhere.”

## MORNING MOTIVATION

Kicking off Tuesday morning was the Voice of the Kansas City Chiefs, Mitch Holthus. The 26-year National Football League broadcaster shared a motivational message about applying his agricultural background to unite the Chiefs organization and fan base. He discussed his “5 C’s for Success” — cooperation, creative, courage, confidence and conduit — and how producers can apply those principles in marketing and growing their operations.

“Perception is not reality. Truth is reality,” Holthus says. “We have the best protein opportunities in the world. That’s why the rest of the world would love to have what we have. But we have to understand, too, that we have to take some courage in doing this right, doing it different, and how this works, because the world still depends on us.”

“If I’m going to give you a suggestion to take back to your operation, [whether] in Canada, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, Colorado, Vermont, it is you can’t be afraid of being a freshman again. It is the characteristic of the men and the women who make it in the National Football League as careers.”

**MITCH HOLTHUS**  
Kansas City Chiefs



Mitch Holthus encouraged producers to step out for change in their operations to increase their success.

## MAXIMIZE YOUR SALE REVENUE AT SALE TIME

Come sale time, there are key areas for maximizing revenue as well as pitfalls to avoid in the other direction. Bill Dunn, Dunn Herefords; Mark Johnson, Producers Livestock Marketing; and Jason Barber, Superior Livestock, along with moderator Mark Core, provided tips to increase sale time profits.

As all three presenters would attest, receiving top dollar requires a year-round marketing effort based on top-notch customer service. Additionally, it is critical producers go the extra mile in their calf management to ensure animals that go to sell are consistently high quality.

“The next owner of this calf needs to make money, too, or

he’s not going to come back,” Jason Barber says. “If we can do a better job getting [calves] ready, if we can continue to improve the performance in them from a genetic standpoint, we can continue to gain market share.”



“We started offering to background our customers’ calves for them, group them with other calves and market them that way, and that service has really driven the bull business for us. We have been able to add value to our bulls and find new bull customers simply because we were offering that service.”

**BILL DUNN**  
Dunn Herefords  
Cochranton, Penn.



On day two of The Brand, presenters shared ways to maximize profit potential through both traditional and digital avenues.



**“Herefords On Demand will take promotion of Hereford seedstock to an all new level.”**

**JOE RICKABAUGH**  
AHA director of field management  
and seedstock marketing

## HEREFORDS ON DEMAND

Next up, AHA Creative Services Coordinator Samantha Albers announced the launch of Herefords On Demand, a new online sale catalog service offered by Hereford Publications Inc. This streamlined digital tool features clean lot layouts with “live” expected progeny differences (EPDs) and detailed search capabilities.

Albers discussed how Herefords On Demand can serve breeders of all sizes in marketing their products.

“This is a very unique resource for Hereford cattle breeders with any size of herd to use in marketing their sale offerings and operations,” she says. “The innovative system, designed with clean and simple layouts and paired with refreshed data and search functions, will excel the idea of marketing for the Hereford breed.”

## USING VIDEO TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Videos are one of the most effective ways to connect with an audience. As photographer and videographer Paige Arnold explains, videos allow for a personable and emotional connection that creates a two-way conversation.

Case in point is Jason Hoffman, Hoffman Ranches, Thedford, Neb., who worked with Arnold on a video to



Video is an art no longer limited to Hollywood. Cattle producers can maximize their business by utilizing this art to share their story with customers and consumers.

capture the essence of the Hoffman family's operation. Hoffman says the video took a whole different direction to what he saw coming. In addition to adding more depth to buyer and seller relationships, he describes how video marketing resonates with a diverse audience, particularly consumers.

“There’s so many ties back to traditional agriculture, and people want to see those videos,” Hoffman says. “Being able to tell your story from the right locations of your operation is huge, and people need to see you drifting through cattle, and the ease you take in the approach, but also the business side of it and how many people it affects.”



**“Marketing is key to everything, and we are definitely picking up quite a bit here. We are going to be more aggressive on Facebook, utilize more video, and we will probably use some drone technology. We want to let people know as much about us as we can — we want to be transparent.”**

**BOB HARRELL JR.**  
Harrell Herefords, Baker City, Ore.

## SOCIAL MEDIA 101 AND 102

Social media is emerging as a popular tool for livestock buyers. According to a 2019 Ranch House Designs report, 37 percent of buyers receive livestock information on Facebook. In two different breakout sessions, attendees learned the ins and outs of social media based on their familiarity and experience with social platforms.

Kendra Davis, AHA director of communications and public relations, and Jessica Moffitt, Vermeer, worked one-on-one with participants in Social Media 101 to get them started on different platforms. Meanwhile, Vermeer team members Mark Core and John Reasor; Kali Andersen, Lessing-Flynn; and Kylee Deniz, National Pork Board, took a deep dive into content development in the Social Media 102 session.



Attendees received one-on-one coaching in the Social Media 101 session.

## USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Social media use among livestock producers is on the rise, and rightfully so. In a Q&A style discussion, Kylee Deniz, National Pork Board, and Natalie Kovarik and JaTanna Williams of Ranch Wives Beef Co., shared how they utilize social media, particularly Instagram, to communicate transparency about the beef industry.

Kovarik and Williams described how social media platforms create trust and build connections with followers. In addition to sharing stories of the ranching community, social platforms are very cost effective — in fact, they are completely free to set up and use. Most importantly, social platforms allow businesses to be genuine.

“Authenticity is definitely the key to building your community,” says Williams. “Authenticity — show up, be yourself, don’t get dressed up for the camera... be your true self. You have your customers that you have been talking to face-to-face for years and you have a genuine soul and something they love about that. Take that and launch that into the social media world.” **HW**



**“I think what we just witnessed in the last couple days is the ideal state of [what] an association is all about.”**

**MARK CORE**  
Chief marketing officer, Vermeer