

Taking a Proactive Approach

Despite an unforgiving year of nasty weather and poor markets, Hereford genetics remain a reliable option to withstand the tough times.



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“Tough,” “challenging,” and “never seen before” are all words used by cattlemen and farmers to describe this past year. Mother Nature and the markets have been tough on ranchers. Normally, these two issues are not directly correlated, but it seems this has been a year unlike any other — or at least not in the lifetime of most ranchers. As I write this column, Mother Nature is throwing us a bit of a bone. The forecast is low 70s with sun, but the bookends of this weather pattern brought lots of rain on the frontend, and will bring rain and highs in the 40s by the week’s end. Combines are sitting in cornfields, and those who have done some harvesting have seen a big variation in yields.

The markets have experienced some real variation over the past few months and, currently, there have been some rebounds and the seedstock Hereford sales this fall have really gotten off to a strong start with all things considered.

When the going gets tough

In addition to markets and Mother Nature, lately it seems part of our society does not appreciate the need for ranchers. Impossible Burger and Beyond Burger are getting major publicity from the media. However, the facts about consumer demand for beef surely give us a reason to be optimistic as we face these challenges. The truth is we are producing more pounds of beef in the U.S. with fewer cows on inventory while the per capita consumption of beef in the U.S. has increased. Very strong scientific research confirms beef is a great option for high-quality protein and other nutrients needed to keep a body healthy. In addition, cattle are the best at sustainably, converting non-edible products to a truly nutritious product with little to no effect on the environment.

The latest data show there are about 31 million beef cattle in the U.S., which

mostly occupy land with little to no value for any other business. In fiscal year (FY) 2018, the American Hereford Association (AHA) reported more than 121,000 cows on inventory. This was the largest inventory reported since the start of Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™), representing about 0.4% of the total cattle population and about 10% of the total cows on inventory amongst all beef breed associations. This information is significant because it represents the importance of the seedstock industry as it produces bulls for commercial cattlemen to make genetic improvement and to provide profitability for all sectors of the industry.

Over the past few years, the AHA has been very active in providing real-world data which show the benefit of Hereford genetics in a crossbreeding program to increase profitability. In addition to adding profitability, the Hereford breed has the opportunity to add value in areas of convenience traits.

In FY 2020, the AHA will introduce a new national ad campaign designed in collaboration with the Grant Company LLC, based in St. Joseph, Mo. The new national tagline will be “Come Home to Hereford.” Ads in this campaign will focus on the legendary benefits of Hereford genetics in cow herds while continuing to focus on areas of economic relevance for the industry. Please find the first of a series of ads scheduled to appear over the next year on this page. This one focuses on the docility of the Hereford breed and the maternal advantage the Hereford cow has in productivity in all environments because of her efficiency, longevity and fertility.

When things are tough, the tough will always survive. Ranchers are tough and the AHA and its membership will continue to focus on making the industry profitable by keeping an eye on both input costs and outputs.

Come home to Hereford. **HW**

