

Reflections of Past and Present

In a year like 2020 where life has thrown everything at us but the kitchen sink, I have found I focus more on reflection. In fact, as I sit here writing amid my quarantine due to COVID-19 reflecting on the past and knowing how far we have come as a breed is quite inspirational. Did you know the Hereford breed originated circa 1742 in Herefordshire, England? Did you know it took until 1817 for Hereford cattle to come to the U.S.? Maybe you did know this because you participated in the National Junior Hereford Association's quiz bowl contest, or you find yourself really interested in Hereford history.

Together as one

Well, as I personally reflect on the last 258 years since our breed was founded in England, I like to

think about how far we have come. Our breed has performed in the feedyards, won in the showing, been docile enough for a 7-year-old to handle and has been in our hearts for a very longtime.

The number of generational ranches in our breed is astounding, and I could not name them all if I tried. These families, these ranches and this breed has withstood everything from depressions to drought, blizzards to hurricanes and every other thing nature or otherwise has thrown at them.

It is honestly no wonder our ranching community has been so resilient during 2020. We have been through worse as an industry, but we have always come back stronger. In fact, seeing the smiles of juniors at the 2020 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo this summer, after every hoop we jumped through to make it happen, made the countless Zoom calls and hours worth it, and made this year worth it.

You see, the use of technology is another thing on which to reflect. In years before, we had no Zoom, no social media to spread information.

When we look back at the very first National Polled Hereford Show in Nashville, Tenn., in 1974 and think about what we pulled off this year it would have been impossible to pull off a similar feat at that time for this breed. However, it became possible when the people who make up this breed decided to stop at nothing to host an event for juniors to showcase their hard work. The people of this breed made it happen.

It has been 25 years of progress since one of our most significant changes in the Hereford breed. The choice to no longer be divided between the American Hereford Association and the American

Polled Hereford Association; the choice to merge as one Association committed to providing cattlemen and cattlemen advances in breed registry, genetic improvement and education.

Although I was not alive to see it happen, I still feel the effects of this change in our breed. The merger created an opportunity for our breed to work together in our efforts to produce cattle that meet the needs of the production industry.

With this merger we began to combine polled and horned Hereford cattle to make our breed better in all facets; feedlot, seedstock, and showing. Together the people of this breed made it possible for growth and longevity that will allow for future generations to have the same love and passion for the red-and-white-faced cattle breed.

Hereford cattle have changed over the years no doubt. We have bred for small and round, tall and narrow, eventually leading to stout and functional. We have been trend-setters in show products, genetic development and junior programs. We have developed marketing campaigns, feedlot programs and scholarship opportunities.

Our cattle and kids have an industry that backs them and a Hereford family to love them. All of this is possible because of the people who strive to make our breed better every day. The Hereford breed will withstand 2020, and we will become better for it. It is what we have done over the years and it is what we will continue to do, together. **HW**



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