

On Target

A commitment to improvement drives demand for Hereford's efficiency, fertility and docility.



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Many of you are heavy into calving, preparing for production sales and thinking about breeding decisions. Each of these activities creates a level of excitement and anticipation and provides an opportunity to evaluate how breeding decisions affect herds and meet customer needs. Before writing this column, I reflected on the last three years of February columns I have written, and this is what I found:

- In 2018, I talked about the American Hereford Association's (AHA) upgrade to a weekly genetic evaluation utilizing Biometric Open Language Tools (BOLT) software. This evaluation utilizes pedigrees, phenotypes and genotypes to produce genetic values. In addition to the new software, the AHA added the dry matter intake (DMI) and sustained cow fertility (SCF) traits to its evaluation.
- In 2019, I reviewed genetic trends in the beef industry and in the Hereford breed that have allowed producers to raise more pounds of beef with fewer cows. Paired with proper health, nutrition and weaning programs and

technology, these genetic changes improved the efficiency of the entire beef cattle cycle and the Hereford breed. Our membership has done a great job utilizing all tools for improved efficiency.

- In 2020, I discussed the National Reference Sire Program and its role in identifying great, young sires in the Hereford breed. Both Stahly Ranches, Cavour, S.D., and Olsen Ranches, Harrisburg, Neb., have been cornerstones of this program. All data from the then 20-year-old program feeds into the AHA's genetic evaluation, like data from seedstock producers. This evaluation has set the Hereford breed apart by identifying genetics within the breed that will make a true difference.

In this issue

These three points continue to be valuable tools for AHA members and their customers to make improvements in economically relevant traits. Commercial producers recognize the value of crossbreeding for both direct and maternal effects to drive profitability.

As seedstock producers, it is imperative for us to understand the needs of our customers and to produce the genetics they need. Beyond data collection is the grass-roots value of diligent selection for disposition, conformation and feet and leg soundness.

In this issue, you will find stories from commercial producers who utilize Hereford genetics, and some who have added Hereford genetics to their cow herds. They understand the value crossbreeding with Hereford genetics brings to their programs. As commercial producers continue to "Come Home to Hereford," seedstock producers must stay committed to genetic improvement. Casey Voight of Voight Ranch, N.D., says it best, "The F1 [first generation] Hereford-Angus cross cow is the best cow in history."

In addition to the baldy cow, you will also learn about how Wayne Wilhelm, Texas, utilizes Hereford genetics to produce F1 calves that function well in their tough environment.

Keep your eye on your target, and the Hereford breed will continue to see growth and demand. **HW**