

HEREFORD

The voice of the American Hereford Association | February 2021

WORLD

The Best in History

Hereford-sired calves at Voigt Ranch, Beulah, N.D., add pounds, docility and fertility.

by **Diane Meyer**

It is a classic “Come Home to Hereford” tale if there ever was one.

In west-central North Dakota, Don Voigt bought some land, and in 1971, Voigt Ranch came to life. Back then, Hereford cattle were the natural choice to stock the ranch.

Casey Voigt, who inherited his dad’s love for raising cattle, took over the ranch in 1996. He kept a small herd of baldy cows, but eventually switched to an Angus-based cow herd. About 12 years ago, Casey decided he needed to add more vigor to his calves.

“I wanted to go for heterosis, so Herefords were a natural choice for crossbreeding because of my father’s upbringing with the Hereford genetics,” Voigt shares. He began buying Hereford bulls and out-crossing on his black cow herd.

“I can remember as a little kid going with my dad to a Regina [Saskatchewan] bull sale and buying Hereford

bulls,” the cattleman recalls. “I always felt a tremendous amount of pride that my dad had in the quality of Hereford bulls he was buying.”

Now, as the manager of 5,200 acres and a 350-head cow herd, Voigt emulates his father’s management and pride in raising good cattle.

Keep adding

After 12 years of crossbreeding, Voigt has added nearly 75 pounds of weaning weight to his steers, which are marketed in fall video auctions. Calving dates have been pushed to April to market a younger calf crop. Calves that used to weigh in at 600 pounds are now shipping in the 670-pound range.

“It would be hard to truly add up all the benefits of the Hereford cross,” Voigt says. “We’re getting more vigor at birth and better dispositions in the cows.

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“As history shows, the F1 cow has been predominantly the best mother in all of the cattle industry.”

— Casey Voigt



Casey Voigt's father had 40 years of experience running Hereford cows. "My siblings were all very excited to see me bring Hereford genetics back to the ranch," Voigt shares.

He also follows a vaccination routine. At June brandings, calves receive a 4-way vaccine with prespense and a 7-way vaccine with somnus. Growth implants are also given at that time. Come fall, calves are preconditioned for four to five weeks prior to shipping and receive another round of 4-way and 7-way vaccines.

Always looking for new opportunities on the horizon, Voigt's intermediate goal is to develop a market for his F1 replacement heifers. With an already diligent herd-health program, he is also looking to market steer calves through the American Hereford Association's Hereford Advantage program.

Above all, Voigt and his wife, Julie, hope to pass their love for the cattle business to their daughter, Leah, and son, Casey Lane. With the help of Hereford genetics, Voigt hopes to leave a successful operation for the next generation.

"I take a lot of pride in seeing what the quality is and how many improvements we make over the years," he says. "I think crossbreeding with Hereford bulls has been one of the best decisions I've made over the years." **HW**

People from feedlots where I'm finishing my steers tell me they are firm believers you also get better immunity. So to add up all those benefits, you just keep adding."

In particular, the first generation (F1) crosses from mating mature Angus cows to Hereford bulls yield the best results in weight gain and fertility.

"When it comes down to the cows, the F1 Hereford-Angus cross cow has been predominantly the best cow in the industry," he says. He points to the calving ease and docility of his cows as proof. In his 350-head herd, he only pulled a couple calves during the most recent calving season — and all due to breech.

Most importantly, Voigt says, "The big draw for me to cross Hereford on Angus was to get a better disposition, and that shows up in the cows for eternity."

When it comes down to bulls, he sources Hereford sires with moderate frame size that add muscle mass, depth of rib and muscle definition. He looks for bulls ranking in the top-10% of the breed for Certified Hereford Beef profit index (CHB\$) to attract as many buyers as possible who are willing to pay a premium for his steer calves.

"The ultimate goal is to try and get the heifers to bring as much money as the steers," he says.

A better cattleman

It takes more than optimum genetics to get a herd in top shape. As one of the first producers to go through the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certification program through North Dakota State University, Voigt has been following BQA guidelines for about 25 years.



Voigt gives credit to the extra heterosis from crossbreeding the two British breeds for positive weight gain in calves.

