

Making the Best Next Move

If you are reading this, you have successfully navigated the first full month of 2021. Congratulations! With last year's challenges in the rearview mirror, we have lots of reasons to celebrate and look forward to good things to come. Now that we are on a direct path to spring, it is time to get serious about planning for what comes next. With many of us still knee deep in battling winter weather and getting new babies safely on the ground, it may be hard to switch mindsets to think about the next phase of production.

Spring ahead

Before making any decisions, it is important to take stock of your program as it stands now. What is working for you and your family or business partners? What do you think can be changed or improved? Is your current calf crop going to meet the needs of your buyers or replacement program?

A favorite piece of advice I try to keep in mind during these

discussions is to not lose sight of the forest for the trees. (Many thanks to my collegiate judging coaches for repeatedly pounding that saying into my head!) This mindset has many applications, and in the case of cattle selection, it reminds us not to fall into the trap of single-trait selection. In other words, do not focus so much on one area to improve or remove that you lose ground in other important areas.

As we identify strengths and weaknesses in our programs in relation to available resources and goals, it is critical to avoid chasing right-now trends and a single physical or genetic attribute. Working in the advanced reproductive field, I frequently see this mistake in programs that consistently push hard for, let's say, carcass traits. Selecting for carcass traits may fill a certain need for you, but at what cost? Do you inevitably sacrifice fertility or longevity traits at the same time? Also, keep in mind the decisions you make today will not result in a return on your

investment for quite some time. This is another good reason to make sure you choose the next step wisely!

Luckily for all of us, we have an organization full of tools and resources to help us when making decisions this spring to keep moving our programs forward. Standard expected progeny differences (EPDs), genomic-enhanced EPDs and indices are gaining accuracy all the time with the submission of more real data into the American Hereford Association's (AHA) database.

What's even better than all of that data? The Hereford community! When you start your spring purchasing or breeding decisions, reach out to trusted breeders, AHA field representatives, etc., to help you gain the knowledge you need to make the best next move. **HW**

To join and to learn more about the NHW, visit HerefordWomen.com or email nationalherefordwomen@gmail.com.



OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

President – Dana Pieper, Zurich, Kan.
President elect – Shannon Worrell, Mason, Texas
Vice president – Betsy Pitstick, S. Solon, Ohio
Secretary – Diane Wilson, Rixeyville, Va.
Treasurer – Nikki Rogers, Eatonville, Wash.
P.O. Box 1122, Milton, WA 98354
Historian – Nikki Rogers, Eatonville, Wash.
Communications – Briley Miller, Newcastle, Wyo.
Ex Officio – Sharon King, Columbia, Miss.

DIRECTORS

Bridget Beran, Clafin, Kan.
Kathy Bryan, Garrison, Texas
Erika Evoniuk, Dayton, Ohio
Allison May, Williamsport, Md.
Bonnie Reed, Hampton, Minn.
Sally Winkler, Pikeville, Tenn.

HerefordWomen.com