

Spring into Sire Selection

Select sires to maximize genetic success with AHA resources.

It is time to “pull the trigger” on sire selections for the spring breeding season. It is an exciting, yet challenging, time because sire selection affects both your herd and your customers’.

The majority of genetic improvement directly results from sire selection, considering 87.5% of a calf’s genetics are inherited from three sires in a calf’s pedigree (50% from the sire, 25% from the dam’s sire and 12.5% from the dam’s maternal grandsire).

With winter and calving season in full swing, it is important to evaluate your most recent calf crop’s performance in calving ease (CE) and calf vigor. Also assess the performance of your 2-year-old cows bringing new genetics to your program. How did these young cows calve? Have they been good caretakers of their first calves? How is their udder quality and milk production? Are they keeping a good body condition score? Their performance with that of their bull mates can give insight into your herd’s success and areas which need protection when making future sire selections.

Selecting sires

Along with the March *Hereford World*, you will find the American Hereford Association’s (AHA) annual *AI Source Book*. It features artificial insemination (AI) sires — both up-and-coming and proven.

The AHA provides resources for you to make goal-based decisions. For instance, some breeders study pedigrees and dive deep into those for decisions; others examine phenotypic

measurements (both individual and progeny), while others commit to genetic selection based on expected progeny differences (EPDs), including pedigree, performance measurements and now, genotypes.

I think these factors are all vital to proper selection. The AHA also has one of the most unique sire testing programs in the world, allowing you to make decisions on younger sires proven for all traits of economic relevance.

I encourage every Hereford breeder to build a good AI program. It allows you to incorporate genetics that are not readily available. An AI program lets you make breeding decisions for different cows in your programs. For example, you might want to consider a proven CE bull for your yearling heifers or adding some end-product merit to your herd. With AI, you can find outliers for all relevant carcass traits for you and your customers or identify calving-ease sires. Today, AI is much more accessible to producers because of timed breeding and readily available AI technicians.

As important as sire selection is to a program, it needs to be coupled with a proper health and nutrition protocol. As you work through the *AI Source Book* and research sires through all of the AHA resources, be sure to reach out to other breeders and owners. Ask them questions about the sires you are considering. Remember, the sire you select today will have a huge influence on your herd and your customers’ herds for years to come. **HW**



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