

Faith over Fear

What happens to agriculture without support from media?



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No one knew what to expect, but it ended grandly. In this issue, we are proud to showcase the decorated champions from the inaugural Cattlemen's Congress in Oklahoma City. Starting on Page 43, celebrate with exhibitors as they took home supreme titles, herdsman honors and new genetics.

While #TeamHereford gathered in Oklahoma City, another congregation erupted in Washington, D.C. Our country watched in disbelief as protestors took over the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6. It was hard to fathom, let alone think about its future implications. As I thought more about the consequences, the more concerned I became for what these events mean for agriculture.

Unintended consequences

As a news-consuming citizen, the inconsistent reports about the presidential election and the ensuing protests are frustrating. Do articles of merit not exist? As media by default, I sympathize.

A grade-school truth I learned playing telephone is there is a slim-to-none chance a story gets relayed correctly. Sometimes our most vigilant fact-checking and source diversity isn't enough; inevitably every writer shares wrong information. This is called misinformation — think mistake.

Danger lies in disinformation, or deliberately misleading content. As Agricultural Communicators Network President Gil Gullickson pointed out in a recent blog, widespread disinformation has confused all U.S. citizens, including readers of agricultural publications.

Losing faith in media is dangerous, for our nation's safety and agriculture's future. Our industry depends on journalists to connect urban society and rural communities, helping to ease a disconnect that will never shrink. What happens to agriculture when our community loses faith in national news

because of fear and distrust? In turn, what happens to agriculture without support from national media?

We cannot give up telling our story. Ever. For the possibility of agriculture making national headlines in a positive light we need to have say in the message.

So start small. Work with your local media to share agriculture's positives — new technologies, environmental stewardship and a grass-roots work ethic. I think you will find most newspeople appreciate cooperative and informative sources.

In this issue

In the name of storytelling, we are honored to share the stories of Hereford breeders who have and continue to make a name in the business. On Page 24, see how Sidwell Herefords, Carr., Colo., is building on 113 years of history. On Page 36, visit with Travis and Sarah McConnaughy, who have taken the reins at WMC Cattle, Wasola, Mo.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. McDonald "Mac" Bonebrake Feb. 9. His wit and smile will be missed, but his story will live on in the hearts of his loved ones and in the pages of this issue. Turn to Page 30 to hear Mac's story, which our team will always regret he never had the chance to read himself.

As we enter the heart of sale season, I enjoy seeing sale previews and successes. Congratulations, Hereford breeders, on a job well done promoting your operations. Several breeders have found and sold their next herd bulls using Herefords On Demand, an online tool for building and sharing sale catalogs. Find out how this tool can help grow your business on Page 98. Finally, see how 2020 Hereford sales wrapped up on Page 132.

As we enter spring, I hope your faith in the future is bright and your smile brighter. **HW**