

# Patience and Perseverance

**Sam Hunter strives to produce cattle as solid as the Appalachian Mountains surrounding him.**

by *Samantha Albers*

**N**estled in a picturesque corner of the Great Appalachian Valley, the birds are chirping, and the sun is beginning to shine on SCH Polled Herefords after a night of thunderstorms. The grass is a vibrant green and the cool, spring breeze awakens the newborn calves to follow alongside their mothers. Sam Hunter of Hagerstown, Md., starts up his work truck and looks down the lane at his group of mature cows, continuing on like all other spring mornings to check the rest of his herd.

“My two best friends — patience and perseverance,” Hunter says as the last of his yearlings join the rest of the group. He lives by this phrase every day. On his farm, those words ring true as he sees to every last detail and task for

his herd — from breeding decisions, vaccination protocol and marketing his cattle to breeders in his area for their next herd prospects.

Grounded in the agricultural industry with a sheep and Shorthorn cattle background, Hunter’s story in the Hereford breed began as a young kid from northwestern Pennsylvania. He caught the “bug” for the bald-faced breed after winning a Hereford steer calf at a high school livestock judging contest. From there, his passion for livestock and the cattle industry only grew.

## **Patience in evaluation**

Learning and developing patience through the years helped guide Hunter through both his education and finding his niche in the industry.

His eye for livestock, not only won Hunter his first Hereford, but also landed him at Pennsylvania State University under the tutelage of legendary livestock judging coach Herman Purdy.

Hunter was a member of the history-making national champion livestock judging team at the 1966 Chicago International Livestock Show in Chicago, Ill. It was the first time the college garnered the top honor. Hunter left Penn State with more than judging accolades, though; he left with a way to evaluate stock.

“One thing I really look for is good structure and foundation in cattle,” Hunter says. “Like Herman Purdy, our judging coach, would tell



Aside from raising and marketing Hereford cattle, Sam also mows and bales his own hay and sells to equestrians in the Hagerstown area.

us, ‘When an animal is walking, where its front foot picked up, that back foot should be planted right where that front one was.’”

Other traits Hunter keeps in mind when evaluating cattle to make performance and marketing decisions include the phenotype, body condition scores (BCS), udder quality, temperament, docility, functionality, growability and gain, and profitability of the animals. Because he selects based on these traits, the majority of his herd is structurally correct, sound and maternally oriented, with the fleshing ability to maintain a BCS 5.



### Perseverance on the map

Like the windy roads in the valley where he resides, Hunter’s path in the industry ventured along the east coast. After graduating from college in 1967, Sam began his journey down the “show road” and worked for a Charolais breeder in Virginia, before he headed south to Rollins Ranch in northern Georgia.



He explains that high-performing and sound cattle have more longevity in the pasture, and tremendous strides have been made to enhance the performance and genetics in today’s Hereford cattle. “The docility found in Herefords would be number one for me and the good people that we do business with,” Hunter says.

The experience gained in competitive livestock judging helped guide Hunter to produce quality Hereford cattle in the Old Line State. The many hours of livestock judging, classwork and travel to local, regional and national level livestock shows gave him the patience needed to continue persevering through his education and employment.

“Nothing happens overnight. The harder it comes to you, the more you can appreciate it,” Hunter says.



“Acknowledge people and listen to those that are more experienced than you are, most people are going to try to help you,” says Sam Hunter.

By 1974, he found himself in Maryland to manage Huckleberry Hall Farm, where part of SCH Polled Herefords currently sits. As the herdsman at Huckleberry Hall Farm, he set up an agreement allowing him to keep a cow for his own herd each year that he managed the farm and helped with the annual production sale.

Following Huckleberry Hall Farm’s dispersal sale in the mid-1980s, Hunter had about 20 head

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of Hereford cattle, and SCH Polled Herefords found its home on a part of the acreage.

He considers the selection of KCF Victor 08N X4 to be a pivotal point for his farm and herd. Hunter purchased interest in KCF Victor 08N X4, a Hereford sire widely used around the country, in the early-'90s with Knoll Crest Farm in Red House, Va. Hunter believed the bull's genetics would bolster the growability of the SCH Polled Herefords' herd with his high-performing EPDs.

With this sire's first calf crop on the ground in 1991, Hunter truly felt he landed on the "Hereford map" of cattlemen across the country, and he was able to promote his cattle with the sire's proven genetics.

"The greatest part that sticks out to me is having the respect of a fellow breeder," Hunter says. "Being recognized as a superior breeder with functional livestock who can merchandise them fairly and with reputation to help back that."

Now raising Hereford cattle on approximately 70 acres, Hunter and his wife, Linda, breed around 35-40 cows each year. Hunter sells his

calves private treaty to local cattle producers. Both loyal, repeat customers and young breeders just entering the industry find value in Hunter's genetics. With his hard work and dedication to the industry through the years, Hunter has faced and conquered the mountains and valleys. Today, SCH Polled Herefords is recognized as a 48-year Hereford member of the American Hereford Association and a Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program.

Even with all of the highs and lows that come with raising livestock, his core pillars of being honest and forthright, doing the right thing and having patience and perseverance shine through in both his operation and his everyday life, which are one-in-the-same. He adds, "Someone with patience and perseverance can develop a program, work hard enough and do the right things to be successful in any industry." **HW**

