

Commercially Driven

Hereford heterosis adds pounds and decreases cost.



Jack Ward is the executive vice president of the American Hereford Association. He can be reached at jward@hereford.org.

Given the market uncertainty and volatility common in cattle markets, commercial cattlemen must be ever more diligent in selection decisions and finding ways to increase efficiency and profit at the ranch level. This is why more are “Coming Home to Hereford” for breed advantages through direct and maternal heterosis.

In the first year of a three-year research project, 10 Hereford bulls and 10 Angus bulls were randomly mated to 400 Angus-based commercial cows at Lacey Livestock in California. The next two years, 15 bulls of each breed were randomly mated to 600 Angus-based cows in the extensive range conditions of the Lacey operation. This field trial was conducted for the American Hereford Association (AHA) by California State University-Chico, in collaboration with Lacey Livestock, Harris Feeding Co. and Harris Ranch Beef Co.

Coupled with other feedlot performance measures, total cost of gain for the Hereford-sired calves was \$4.37 per hundredweight (cwt.) less than the Angus-sired ones. Feedlot breakeven was \$2.22/cwt. less for the Hereford-sired calves.

Pre-weaning weights were consistently heavier for the Hereford-sired calves, compared to those sired by Angus. Carcass performance was similar between the sire groups, although

marbling scores were significantly higher for the Angus-sired calves.

Pregnancy rates were documented for yearling heifers in the second and third years of the study. In both years pregnancy rates were 7% higher in Hereford-sired heifers (93%) than those sired by Angus (86%). Heifers were bred via artificial insemination (AI).

Additionally, data from the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center and feed intake research conducted by David Lalman at Oklahoma State University detail the value of adding Hereford genetics to a cow herd.

Progress through learning more

AHA's commitment to providing commercial producers with tools and information to make informed decisions includes the National Reference Sire Program (NRSP), which evaluates young sires' performance in commercial environments and contributes to AHA genetic evaluation.

Last year, NRSP calves born in 2019 were evaluated for all traits of economic relevance: 71% of the steers graded in the upper two-thirds of Choice (almost 100% graded at least Choice); 29% of the calves out of 2-year-old dams graded Prime; steers were an average Yield Grade 3. Based on individual feed intake data, the feedlot-to-gain ratio was about 5:1.

Similarly, the AHA feedout program enables Hereford breeders and commercial users of Hereford genetics — all sizes — to retain ownership and collect individual animal feedlot and carcass performance. The cattle are fed at HCR Feedyards near Scott City, Kan., and harvested at National Beef. For the most recent steers harvested: 83.6% graded Choice and higher; 8.2% graded Prime; the average Yield Grade was 2.8.

For perspective, according to the U.S. Premium Beef Update for National Beef plants in Kansas, 7.9% of carcasses graded Prime last year. Through March this year, 6.0% graded Prime in the same plants. During both time periods, just over 88% graded Choice and higher.

Alongside documented advantages in feedlot and pasture efficiency, you see more clearly how Hereford genetics add profit to all parts of the beef supply chain.

Commercially committed

Continuous genetic progress stems from AHA member commitment to genetic improvement in areas of economic importance with a clear focus on the commercial industry.

Breeder commitment includes Whole Herd Total Performance Recording and other improvement tools. In 2020, AI-sired calves represented 30% of the calves registered at AHA. **HW**



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Member Cattle Registration Fees

Age of calf	Paper	Electronic
Up to 4 months	\$14.50	\$12.50
4-8 months	\$20.50	\$17.50
8-12 months	\$27.50	\$22.50
More than 12 months	\$52.50	\$52.50



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