

Power into 2022

Double-down on your commitment to building genetics that make a difference.

“Come Home to Hereford, Where Grit Builds Greatness.”

Focusing on grit as the central theme for this year’s American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Report was as appropriate as it is obvious, given the unique challenges everyone faced in 2021.

Tom Field, Paul Engler chair of agribusiness at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, focused on grit during his presentation at the Educational Forums during the AHA Annual Membership Meeting and Conference. He shared this definition: “Grit is the dogged pursuit of what we care deeply about, that with meaning and purpose.”

This definition aptly describes the cattle industry and Hereford breeders.

As cattle producers, AHA members demonstrate grit as they continue to face a variety of challenges fostered by the pandemic, in addition to traditional ones.

As craftsmen and craftswomen, Hereford breeders display grit as they embrace the challenge and opportunity of providing commercial cow-calf producers with answers to management and economic challenges. Hereford’s foundational traits of fertility, longevity, docility and efficiency are all part of the solution.

These inherent advantages are magnified when commercial producers utilize Hereford within a crossbreeding program. There is heterosis, of course, but with Hereford it is heterosis-plus. The Hereford breed is the most distantly related *Bos taurus* breed, as illustrated through the 2000 bull project, conducted by the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center. So, other than using *Bos indicus* breeds, Hereford genetics provide producers with English and Continental cattle the most hybrid pop. Plus, crossbreeding provides the biggest boost to more lowly heritable traits such as fertility and longevity.

Answering Consumer Concerns

Cattle producers and the beef industry will continue to receive increasing scrutiny from consumers and policy makers. They demand to know more about how their beef is raised and are especially interested in animal welfare, environmental impact and sustainability.

The same Hereford genetic advantages that provide solutions to the commercial cow-calf sector also address these consumer concerns. All of this offers Hereford breeders the opportunity to continue growing market share.

While expanding demand for Hereford genetics will never be easy, AHA members have already demonstrated their commitment to combining keen stockmanship with the necessary tools to make genuine, positive differences for their customers — tools like genomic evaluation and Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™). That takes grit.

Hereford breeders need to maintain this commitment to embracing the tools available for genetic improvement. But, they must also keep steady focus on other key areas, such as progressive animal health and precise management to supply the industry with cattle that answer consumer demands for quality and sustainability. All of this will continue to increase the value of Hereford genetics.

“You can’t ignore some level of skill and ability, but at the end of the day, sustained success comes from one thing: the ability to stick with the process, stick with the fight and do the work when it’s easy and when it’s hard,” Field said.

I challenge each of you to begin 2022 with a resolution to not only build a better product, but to use as many sources as possible to market your program and the Hereford breed.

During this holiday season, enjoy time spent with family and friends. My family and the AHA staff wish all of you a Merry Christmas. May God bless each of you. **HW**



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