

Genetic Sustainability



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Share Hereford's efficiency advantages.

Congratulations to all of the award winners and honorees recognized during the recent American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Membership Meeting and Conference in Kansas City, Mo. Your dedication and commitment to the breed are inspiring.

It was exciting to see those big smiles on the faces of the juniors who earned top honors in the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Fed Steer Shootout. This educational opportunity and competition provides young people the opportunity to learn about the entire cattle business, while also gathering data to improve the genetics in their herds. I'm thankful for these youngsters' willingness and dedication to take advantage of the opportunity.

Track and share your progress

AHA members are commended for the breed's extraordinary genetic progress in most every trait. Keep in mind the value of studying benchmark reports through your MyHerd account to track your unique herd's phenotypic trends and genetic trends relative to breed average. Besides providing guide posts for your genetic journey, this information arms you with key talking points to share with customers and prospects. It's one thing to say you have made progress but it's another to show the progress you have made in specific traits.

Similarly, I hope you have developed your one-minute elevator speech. There is no better time than now to tout the obvious inherent Hereford advantages. Be ready to share the key messages of how Hereford genetics can positively impact your customer's bottom line.

Efficiency — Key to sustainability

In our output-driven society, it is easy for some to forget efficiency is one Hereford advantage. It's time to challenge the outrageous, continued drive so many in the industry have to

breed more growth on top of growth, especially when added growth is typically achieved without gains in efficiency. This misguided effort is even more damaging when replacement females are retained, which is typically the case.

Countless studies document the ability of the Hereford breed to produce more with fewer inputs — Hereford cattle consume 2 pounds less feed per day, on average, compared to any other breed. That's an efficiency homerun from pasture to plate.

Beyond feed efficiency, when compared to straightbred Angus cattle, 7-10% more Hereford-sired black baldy females become pregnant. As would be expected, based on reports I receive, this advantage is larger this year in areas challenged by drought.

Again, Hereford and Hereford-sired females require fewer inputs than their counterparts to support reproduction, so more stay bred. If that's not sustainability I do not know what it is.

Sustainability will continue to be a buzzword as consumers demand increasing levels of accountability. Cattle are part of the answer to sustainability concerns and always have been, due to their ability to convert otherwise unusable forages into human-edible protein.

Between 1961 and 2018, the U.S. beef industry reduced emissions per pound of beef by more than 40% while producing more than 60% more beef per animal, according to research funded by the Beef Checkoff. Hereford has the most compelling story. We must recognize Hereford efficiency is a key part of the sustainability solution. That's worth incorporating into your customer messaging as you continue to make improvements in your herd.

Let's keep this train of Hereford enthusiasm stoked and rolling.

Merry Christmas! **HW**