

by **Trey Befort**

Understanding what defines value in a buyer's eyes on sale day is an essential part of marketing feeder cattle and maximizing profit potential. This includes a variety of factors such as condition, vaccination protocol and products used, genetics and more.

One critical value component — consistency — is sometimes misunderstood. It is easy to point fingers and make excuses about why buyers or auction markets sort cattle a certain way or apply premiums and discounts. At the end of the day, buyers strive to procure a consistent group of cattle that will reach their end point and target goals with minimal variation in feedyard performance and carcass quality. Buyers generally pay even more if they can buy entire loads fitting the description.

With this in mind, it's easier to understand the value of reducing variation within groups of cattle and entire herds. Offering groups consistent for size, weight, condition and all of the rest with the fewest number of outliers as possible enhances value and often competition among buyers. It also increases the probability for repeat buyers and competition on future calf crops.



Benchmarking variation

The Hereford Feedout Program provides producers a convenient, cost-effective way to take a snapshot of how their genetics perform in the feedlot and on the rail.

“Some of the points that I am emphasizing in my breeding program were verified in this feedout,” says Tom Heidt of K7 Herefords, Lockridge, Iowa, who participated in the most recent Hereford Feedout. “It is probably the best and most reliable way of acquiring actual carcass data and performance on your calves. If

you want to learn something about your calves and their carcass and performance, send them to the feedout program. You will learn it.”

Participating in the program can be a real eye-opener, good or bad.

There is a top end and bottom end of cattle in every group, no matter how positive or negative the group averages are for metrics like average daily gain, hot carcass weight, ribeye area and marbling score. Typically, though, cattle with the most profit potential have much less variation between top and bottom. That's

why buyers place value on consistency, as well as perceived absolute performance potential, when assembling groups of cattle. This reality also emphasizes the value of knowledge gained through programs like this.

Participants can see how their individual cattle perform and how much variation exists between them. They can also see how their cattle perform compared to others enrolled in the program and the variation that exists between groups.

Without actual data, it is impossible to know if you are producing cattle on the low end or high end of feedlot performance and carcass quality. The knowledge and information gained enables data-based decisions to improve quality and reduce variation and inconsistencies within the herd.

If you are interested in improving your knowledge of your herd, it is not too late to participate in the 2023 Hereford Feedout Program. See the general information for the programs below. You are always welcome to reach out with any questions you might have. **HW**

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FED STEER SHOOTOUT NJHA

2023

FED STEER SHOOTOUT CONTEST



Participate in a real world cattle feeding contest

Increase your knowledge of the beef industry

Compete for over \$10,000 in awards and scholarships

Learn more at hereford.org/youth



Contest Entry Deadline:
November 1, 2022

Contest Delivery Dates:
December 10-14, 2022

HRC Feed Yards
Scott City, Kan.

PROVE THE WORTH OF YOUR GENETICS

Maximize your profit potential | Improve carcass EPD accuracy
Collect valuable carcass and performance data | Expand marketing avenues
Gain access to the U.S. Premium Beef® grid | Market into Certified Hereford Beef®

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Groups of 5 head (min.) per producer | Weaned 45+ days
2 rounds of vaccinations (MLV) - specific protocol available upon request |
Financing options available

ENROLLMENT DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 1, 2022
DELIVERY TO HRC FEED YARDS: DECEMBER 10-14, 2022



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