

by **Taylor Belle Matheny**

Every farm and ranch kid knows riding shotgun in the pickup comes with the job of opening gates.

I have fond memories as a kid rattling around in an old truck, looking at cattle with my grandpa and dad, opening gates. That's when I learned about Hereford cattle, why my family found value in the breed and built a foundation for my future.

Fast forward to today, and I still ride shotgun and open gates, but most often with commercial cow-calf producers showing me their cows and the impact of Hereford genetics. Quality conversations, education and stories come with each ride.

The qualities the Hereford breed prides itself in are woven into these conversations — fertility, longevity, efficiency, docility and

sustainability. These attributes are typically why a producer chose the Hereford breed. It's always exciting to hear unique stories about commercial success with Hereford genetics and see the results.

These are examples.

- “Hereford cattle have always been a passion of mine. When adding the Hereford bull to the black cows, the F1 cross black baldy adds more pounds to the steers and more advantages on the heifer side.”
- “I've always believed in crossbreeding cattle. We really needed to moderate the cows and increase the capacity of those cows. Having backfat on them with maternal characteristics is very important.”

- “We need every advantage we can get in this region. If they are going to retain ownership and get carcass data, they will find these things really grade. You are adding value right off the bat with crossbred calves.”

Wherever Kelsey Vejraska, American Hereford Association audio-visual specialist, and I travel across the United States — a commercial operation in Idaho, a stop in New Mexico or a leading regional auction market in Kentucky, the stories about increased profitability with Hereford genetics are similar.

These conversations shape producer testimonials used for breed promotion across various media platforms. Sharing personal experiences and successes is an effective way to connect with other commercial producers and a powerful marketing tool.

I encourage you to spend time riding around with customers to learn how Hereford genetics are adding pounds to their calves and fertility to their replacement females. As you develop your own marketing plan, feature customers who find success with your genetics. A testimonial is a powerful way to share the message and bring producers home to Hereford. **HW**

Taylor Belle Matheny is the director of communications and digital content of the American Hereford Association. She can be reached at [tmatheny@hereford.org](mailto:tmatheny@hereford.org).



(l-r) Kelsey Vejraska and Taylor Belle Matheny share a lift and stories with Bill Goehring, AHA vice president.