

by **Trey Befort**

# Matching Genetics to Environments and Markets

Although drought continues, widespread moisture at the end of the year means more commercial cow-calf producers are starting to think about strategies for building back depleted herds when the opportunity arises. Genetic improvement and marketing opportunities will likely be among the key reloading considerations.

## Use and manage heterosis

Opportunities for genetic improvement are unique to every herd and driven by resources and goals, as well as limitations, be it labor, forage and the like.

With that said, complementary crossbreeding — direct and maternal heterosis — provides the opportunity to leverage resources and build more pounds at less cost. Heterosis created with Hereford genetics offers even more opportunity as they are the least related of *Bos taurus* breeds.

“I don’t understand not taking advantage of heterosis and getting that hybrid vigor so you can take advantage of more weaning weight with the same mature cow size,” says Mike Seal, manager of the 6X Ranch at Mackay, Idaho. He began using Hereford bulls on the ranch’s Angus cow herd about 12 years ago.

“We really needed to moderate the size of the cows we had, change their type and capacity,” Seal explains. “What that’s done for us you see in the weaning weights, but you also see it in your cows that can carry some backfat

into the winter. It gets down to 20 to 25 degrees below zero here, and you don’t have to use your entire haystack to get them through the winter. The capacity of those cows, having the backfat on them, but still having the maternal ability and fertility.”

You can read more about the 6X story in the January issue of *Hereford World*.

## Know the value

Tracking herd performance to make effective genetic and management decisions extends beyond the pasture. Even feeding a few head helps commercial and seedstock producers establish benchmarks, track progress and match cattle to market opportunity.

For instance, the American Hereford Association (AHA) provides Hereford breeders and commercial users of Hereford genetics the opportunity to discover this information conveniently and cost effectively through the Hereford Feedout Program and the associated Fed Steer Shootout for members of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA).

“I think it’s the best, most reliable way of acquiring actual carcass data

and performance of your cattle,” says program participant, Tom Heidt of K7 Herefords, Lockridge, Iowa. “The data verified the points I’m emphasizing in my breeding program.”

By learning their herd’s genetic potential and understanding what performance traits cattle feeders and beef packers find most valuable producers can build a more effective marketing plan to make sounder marketing decisions year after year.

These programs can also help shed light on the opportunity to retain ownership on future calf crops.

After discovering the value captured by those buying their calves, some feedout participants decide to retain ownership and leverage the genetic value they created.

The 2023 Hereford Feedout Program and NJHA Fed Steer Shootout are under way at HRC Feed Yards, Scott City, Kan., with more than 1,100 head from producers across the United States.

## Expand the market window

If retained ownership doesn’t fit a producer’s game plan, the AHA offers other marketing opportunities to those using Hereford genetics.

Several Hereford-influenced feeder calf sales across the country provide added opportunity for those looking to market Hereford-influenced feeder cattle. These sales enable producers to aggregate and offer larger numbers of similar cattle on the same sale day, which benefits both buyers and sellers.

“Those bigger groups of Hereford and Hereford-influenced calves sell right there with the very best black calves that will go through the market anywhere in this part of the country,” says Jim Akers, chief operating officer of Blue Grass Stockyards, Lexington, Ky., which hosts two Kentucky Certified Hereford Influenced Sales each year.

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Additionally, though it is not a requirement of these special auction sales, enrollment in AHA marketing programs, such as the Hereford Advantage, Maternal Advantage or Premium Red Baldy programs, add yet another layer of marketing power and exposure at sale time.

As we get into the heart of spring bull sale season and as folks begin to reload the U.S. cow herd, consider some of these opportunities to help improve your herd and marketing options. **HW**

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## Hereford-influenced Feeder Calf Sales

### Mitchell Livestock Hereford Influenced Feeder Cattle Sale

Date: Feb. 16, 2023  
Location: Mitchell Livestock - Mitchell, S.D.  
Contact: Preston Burma  
605-680-0448

### Tennessee Hereford Marketing Program Feeder Calf Sale




Date: April 12, 2023  
Location: United Producers - Columbia, Tenn.  
Contact: Richard Brown  
931-239-9785

### Cherokee Sales Co. Hereford Influenced Feeder Cattle Sale

Date: April 19, 2023  
Location: Cherokee Sales Co. - Cherokee, Okla.  
Contact: Jarrid Herrmann  
785-564-0869

### Kentucky Certified Hereford Influenced Sale

Date: May 11, 2023  
Location: Bluegrass Stockyards South - Stanford, Ky.  
Contact: L.W. Beckley, DVM  
859-779-1419 **HW**

AHA commercial programs overview		
Program	Program logo	Index used
Hereford Advantage		CHB\$
Premium Red Baldy		BMI\$ or ProS (Red Angus)
Maternal Advantage		BMI\$ or BIIS

For all programs, bulls must have transferred ownership and rank in the top 50% of the breed for the respective index.