

## Striking the Balance

Meeting consumer beef demand requires focusing on productivity as much as focusing on the end-product.



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Domestic beef demand remains resilient despite historically high retail beef prices. International demand for U.S. beef was record-large last year for both volume and value. Both have to do with product quality, the dependable supply and the relative affordability due to increasing beef industry efficiency.

Strong demand also stems from consumer confidence in the safety of U.S. beef, borne by adhering to stringent federal regulations and inspection.

As much as anything, though, demand is based on beef's extraordinary nutritional value.

Eating beef provides essential nutrients, including protein, iron and B vitamins. A single 3-ounce serving supplies 25 grams of protein, about 50% of the recommended daily value.

Certified Hereford Beef® (CHB) consumers get all of that plus the incredible eating experience due to the brand's genetic and quality standards. You will find a list of CHB Sires of Distinction in this issue.

May is U.S. Beef Month, which is also the unofficial start to grilling season. It is an appropriate time to share the benefits of beef with consumers. It is also a time to celebrate cattle producers who work 365 days each year to feed a growing world population in a sustainable manner.

### Balancing product and production

There were 28.9 million beef cows in the U.S. at the beginning of this year, according to USDA's most recent *Cattle* report. That was 4% less than the previous year. Due to extended drought and challenges to profitability, the total number of cattle and calves is nearing historically low levels. When moisture and forage allow, the U.S. beef industry needs to expand by at least 2.5 million cows.

Planned crossbreeding and breed complementarity offer the industry an incredible opportunity to reduce inputs

and increase outputs as the national cow herd rebuilds. Disciplined crossbreeding provides unmatched scope for individual producers and the collective industry to enhance both economic and environmental sustainability.

I recently came across a quote in the Schuler Red Angus sale book. It came from Jim Gosey, University of Nebraska-Lincoln beef cattle specialist emeritus, back in 1999.

"Obviously, cows have to be bred to fit their environment/resource base and their progeny have to produce desirable consumer beef. However, genetic antagonisms between traits and other management factors result in mismatches that occur between optimum cow fitness and optimum carcass fitness. Fortunately, the knowledge base that can be used to manage some of these mismatches has grown in recent years. Given time, effort and commitment, a rancher can develop an action plan to produce not a perfect fit, but a profitable compromise between 'cow goals' and 'carcass goals.'"

I believe Gosey's message is incredibly profound as the nation's commercial producers prepare to expand the cow herd. We must always keep the end-product and consumer needs at the top of our list, but producers must also keep the "cow goals" in mind. Direct and maternal heterosis does pay. Fertility and longevity have long been documented as the most vital traits for sustained cow-calf profitability. Hereford's advantage in efficiency, disposition and adaptability, along with its strong focus on carcass traits, makes Hereford genetics a logical choice to add more productivity and profit potential to the national herd.

In closing, the U.S. will celebrate Memorial Day on May 29. Thanks to each of you who served or are currently serving to protect our freedom. **HW**