

by *Shane Bedwell*

## Keep the Hammer Down



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Opportunity comes with responsibility.

Congratulations to the breeders behind the many Certified Hereford Beef® Sires of Distinction (see Page 32). Your dedication to breeding cattle with the end-product in mind is commendable. Building proof of genetics excelling in potential feedlot and carcass performance is critical to the breed, which is why these sires are honored.

### Keep cutting deep

We are in interesting times with a shrinking cow herd — the smallest inventory since 1962 — and lingering drought that is threatening an even smaller beef cow herd next year. Demand is going to be greater than ever for almost any kind of cattle because numbers are going to be so tight. There will be plenty of temptation to let some bulls squeak by that are just average. Doing so would be a disservice to the hard-won expansion of Hereford demand. We must keep the hammer down on offering commercial cow-calf producers bulls that can help them be profitable.

This spring and winter, I have heard from many about the flurry of new customers, producers who haven't used a Hereford bull in years, if ever. This is obviously cause for celebration, but the genetics must deliver. If they don't, these new customers likely won't return next year or for generations.

Many commercial producers are test driving Hereford for the first time as a new generation takes the reins. They have seen the saturation of black-hided cattle, accompanied by decreased fertility and increased input costs. This next generation is heterosis savvy and knows good cattle are more than just hide color. More than ever, the Hereford breed must consistently provide the very best product possible. If that is accomplished, then these new customers will return next year, likely for the next generation and probably the one after that.

Recently, I sat beside a young commercial cattleman at a bull sale. I was overjoyed by his enthusiasm for the breed. He used Hereford semen to AI his black heifers for the first-time last year. He told me that he loved the resulting baldy calves so much that he needed more. He bought two herd bulls at the sale for an average of \$20,000. He has totally bought in to what Hereford can accomplish for him and is willing to pay for the top genetics that fit his program. He bought the bulls because they were phenotypically good and had expected progeny differences (EPDs) that excelled for the traits important to his operation.

Now is the time to double down and deliver more than ever. I encourage you to keep pushing the needle where you can for your environment, and most importantly, for your customers' needs. *Certified Hereford Beef* Sires of Distinction offer you great opportunities to accomplish this goal.

As always keep them sound. **HW**

### Join your peers at BIF

I invite everyone to attend the 2023 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Meeting and Research Symposium, July 3-7 in Calgary, Alberta. A strong Hereford presence at this event is important, as new ideas and thoughts are exchanged regarding genetic evolution and performance programs. Additionally, breeders have a lot to be proud of when it comes to the level of advancement being made in herds across the country.

For registration information and a conference schedule, visit [BeefImprovement.org](http://BeefImprovement.org). I hope you can find time to attend this important event. **HW**