

# 100 Years of the

## Looking back on 100 years of the *Hereford*

Anyone can open their phone and see the latest beef industry updates. They can view cattle from across the globe in a matter of seconds. However, 100 years ago, that was not the case.

A century ago, producers viewed most bulls in print publications — the *American Hereford Journal* Herd Bull and Reference Edition included. This publication provided the latest updates on the best bald-faced bulls in the nation, and even in the world. Individuals relied solely on the Herd Bull and Reference Edition to be their guide to finding the best sires; the edition was essential to Hereford herd bull promotion.

In 1923, the first Herd Bull and Reference Edition was produced. The publication's name changed from the *American Hereford Journal* to its current name, *Hereford World*, in 1995 when the horned and polled associations merged. This year marks the centennial year celebration of a Hereford Herd Bull and Reference Edition.

There's no doubt the beef industry and Hereford publications have changed over the last 100 years, from the look of the *Hereford World* to its content and cattle. The publication has evolved continuously to keep up with the industry. Despite the changes, one thing has remained the same: the desire to share the Hereford breed's stories.

### Paper and print

The first issue of the special edition focused heavily on the most valuable traits in a herd bull. The issue stressed the importance of selecting the right sire and how this would shape the rest of the herd.

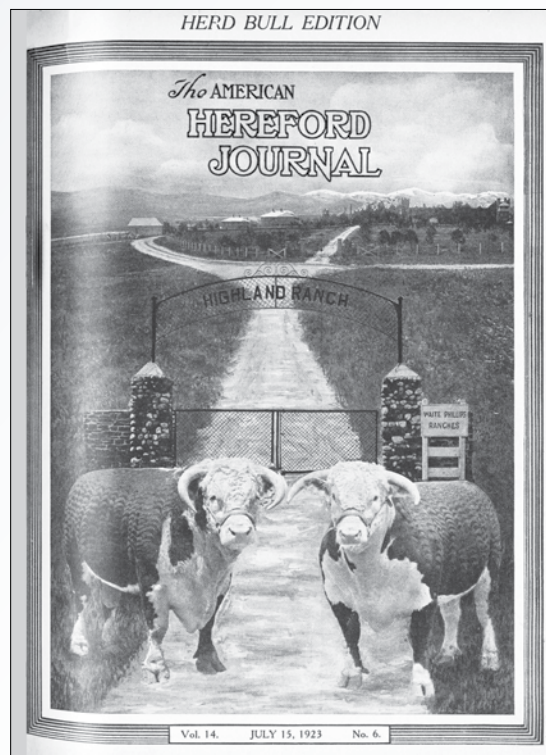
One article explained the benefits of using purebred bulls. It was from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, explaining a still-new government program few are familiar with today: Better Sires — Better Stock Crusade. According to one new purebred believer, "My purebred stock weigh as much in 15 months as my scrubs did in three

years, a savings of 21 months in feed and labor, besides getting a better price."

By way of contrast, the 2022 issue was filled with ads containing genome-enhanced expected progeny difference (EPDs). One article described the collaborative research project between the American Hereford Association (AHA) and Colorado State University to characterize genetics associated with production efficiency, which play a key role in environmental and economic sustainability.

"As individual cattle producers and as the collective beef industry, we will continue to be asked to do more with less, as it relates

to environmental and economic sustainability," explained Jack Ward, AHA executive vice president. "This research continues to document Hereford advantages and their benefit as a component in crossbreeding to increase efficiency, fertility and longevity."



Cover of the first Herd Bull and Reference Edition, 1923.

# Herd Bull Issue

**World Herd Bull and Reference Edition.** *by Riley Greiten*

The 2013 issue reflected on Hereford breeders' dedication to service, from the military to the state senate. Throughout its time in print, the publication always shared stories of the men and women involved in the breed.

An evolutionary "face-lift" took place in 1940, when the publication first printed some ads and editorials with a single spot color.

Now, nearly the entire publication runs in four-color. But in the earliest editions of the Herd Bull and Reference, an advertisement with spot color was eye catching, simply because they were few and far between. When breeders would choose to print an advertisement with color, they were elevating their promotional material. With the added ability to stand out in the crowd came a higher advertising price.

Hereford breeders' advertising focus also shifted with changing times. Early on, advertisers commonly offered a broad look of their programs, the cattle and the pedigrees behind them. As more performance data was collected, leading to

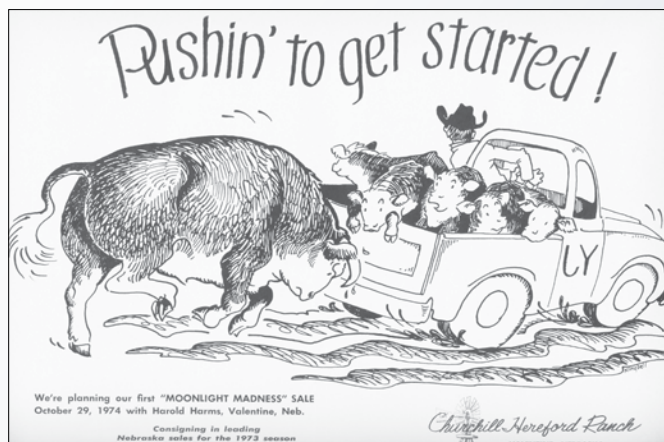
breed-wide genetic evaluation, advertisers offered increasingly detailed information about individual animals and breeding lines.

When people purchase an advertisement today, they most likely submit everything online. However, at one time, all advertisements were sent through the mail. In the months leading up to the July issue, there would already be pages dedicated for Herd Bull and Reference Edition advertisements. Since this was the most common way to advertise, it was highly sought after. The publication showcased hundreds of herd bulls each year.

Telephone communication was not a common option in 1923. The best way to contact breeders was to write to them. It wasn't until the early 1960s, when mass telephone communication



Advertisement from the 1955 Herd Bull and Reference Edition.



Advertisement from the 1973 Herd Bull and Reference Edition.

became the norm. Most of the advertisements in the Herd Bull and Reference Edition either stated "visitors welcome at all times," or "write me if interested."

Another change that made waves in the print publication industry was the influx of photography. At one time, it took hours to develop just one film photo, whereas now photographers can see the results on a screen in seconds. Where photos of the stock were once rare, now there is a photo on almost every page of the publication.

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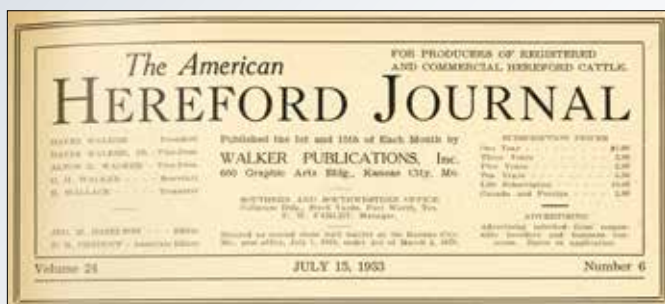
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The cover of a publication is the first thing readers see. Photographs have been used on covers of publications for years; however, the picture quality has improved significantly. In publications from the past, it was common to see a mix of photographs, drawings or paintings on the cover.

With the technological advancements the world has made, the way breeders advertise has shifted. Today, it is easier to promote cattle than ever before.

“With the internet and social media, there has been a wide expanse of how people promote their cattle,” says Joe Rickabaugh, AHA director of seedstock marketing.

Additionally, herd sizes have generally decreased over the past 100 years. It used to be common to have a herd of 200 cattle or more; now, smaller herds have become more customary.



The magazine's indicia from the 10th annual Herd Bull and Reference Edition, 1933.

“We still see some large herds, but the average now is 20 to 25 head,” says Caryn Vaught, *Hereford World* production manager. “These large herds have dispersed throughout the years. If you look in the '90s, you're going to see much larger herds than you see today.”

Smaller herd sizes and more advertising opportunities led to smaller Herd Bull and Reference Edition issues. The 1973 Herd Bull and Reference Edition contained 1,055 pages; last year, the publication totaled 224 pages. However, the Herd Bull issue remains a key element in many advertisers' marketing mix.

### More than a publication

Looking past the *Hereford World*, Hereford cattle have certainly changed. The appearance, genetics and prices of beef cattle have all evolved. Producers' requirements for an efficient herd bull shifted, too. In the first Herd Bull and Reference Edition, advertised bulls were built much differently than today's top sires.

“The wide, deep, medium-lengthed, level top and bottom-lined smooth-from-end-to-end kind, with straight short legs set well apart ...”

said John Burns, Fort Worth, Texas, in a 1923 *American Hereford Journal*. This description is what breeders considered desirable in a herd bull 100 years ago.

Now the industry desires something different. Gone are the belt-buckle-high, shorter-legged cattle of the previous era and the giant cattle produced during the so-called frame race.

“The cattle have changed to be moderate in size, from a frame standpoint,” Rickabaugh says. “They have made the cattle more functional, more easy doing, with more total red meat production in them, in an acceptable size.”

From the early years onward, the Herd Bull and Reference Edition highlighted advancements in breeding systems as well as in genetics. By the 1950s, the notion of disciplined line breeding was garnering more space.

“If a bull's calves are as closely related to one of his outstanding ancestors as the bull himself is, the dams of those calves must be just as closely related to that ancestor as the bull himself is,” explained Jay Lush, Iowa State College, in 1951.

Similarly, the value of straightbred versus crossbred commercial cattle continues to be a topic of conversation.

“I think heterosis brings so many nice things to the beef cattle production formula,” Rickabaugh says. “If you can get another productive year out of a female, that goes straight to the bottom line, it goes to efficiency.”

Today, Hereford heterosis is changing and shaping the beef industry with such advantages as increased weaning weight, fertility and cow longevity.

### The next 100 years

For all of the changes to the publication and the beef industry, some things have remained. Beef producers still put food on peoples' plates and provide for a rapidly growing world.

The publication is still telling the stories about the Hereford breed. The Herd Bull and Reference Edition still features stories about Hereford breeders and commercial users of Hereford genetics. Breeder advertising in the *Hereford World* looks different than it did a century ago, but the publication still promotes Hereford cattle across the country and globe.

While change is inevitable, the future is promising. The Hereford breed is growing, along with opportunities for cattlemen and women utilizing the bald-faced breed. The Herd Bull and Reference Edition will continue to share their stories.

“People look forward to the Herd Bull and Reference Edition, just for the wide array of content that is presented each year,” Rickabaugh says. **HW**