

Take Care

Forging the future requires strategy and discipline.



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As impressive as the cattle at this year's VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo — the quality was as deep as it was extraordinary — the juniors leading them out and participating in the many contests were even more so.

I was privileged to officiate the Hereford bowl matches, which ended with heavyweight quiz bowl title bouts for the ages. I was blown away by the knowledge, talent and professionalism of all the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members who made the buzzer round matches.

The many leadership and professional growth opportunities provided by NJHA and supported by the Hereford Youth Foundation of America's legion of backers are an amazing example of tireless dedication toward ensuring the Hereford breed has insightful, thoughtful and courageous leaders for generations to come.

The juniors, their families, mentors and state organizations deserve the highest commendation. Hereford's future is in more than capable hands.

Expand your boundaries

Not coincidentally, many of these same folks will be in Kansas City, Mo., Oct. 19-22 for the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Membership Meeting and Educational Forum. It is always the annual highlight, in my opinion. The event features a range of industry experts from within and outside of the breed. It's a chance to learn, challenge preconceptions and engage. The meeting is open to every AHA member and their families. State voting delegates determine the new AHA directors, but all events are open to everyone.

Always build and improve

Hereford breeders' singular focus and commitment to genetic improvement over time serve as another illustration of the breed's stalwart foundation and exciting future. It was forged with

steadfast, consistent determination to make right choices, not easy ones.

The latter has been on my mind as the cattle business enjoys one of those rare times in history when any head of cattle walking is worth so much. Plus, it appears some commercial producers could have enough moisture, feed and water to consider herd expansion this fall. The price peak is likely at least 12 months down the road. So, bull sales could be unbelievable this fall and next spring.

Lofty cattle prices tempt culling forgiveness when sorting bull calves or heifers to the keeper pen. The long-term cost of flexible culling criteria always outweighs any short-term gain. For seedstock producers and the breed, the cost is measured in lost customers and market share. For commercial folks, it's lost progress, time and opportunity.

As you begin weaning season and start making your final selections, or prepare for a fall bull sale, make sure your choices represent only the hard work and genetic progress of your operation and the collective breed — no excuses. Start by demanding every potential bull or replacement female meets your minimum threshold level for all traits.

Long-term opportunity is another reason to be unforgiving in selection.

During modern history, every time widespread, persistent drought caused significant herd liquidation, increased cattle quality resulted from the rebuilding effort. Some of that has to do with the natural in-herd genetic improvement as more younger females populate the herd. Much of it has to do with breed choice as an answer to pressing industry needs.

This time around, there's a significant need for the industry to add heterosis to the nation's cow herd with the one breed proven as the essential crossbreeding component: Hereford. But each Hereford bull and female sold must be worthy of the opportunity. Keep them sound. **HW**