

Pedal to the Metal

The American Hereford Association takes giant strides in fulfilling the breed's strategic plan.



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Hereford momentum continues to build in the commercial cow-calf sector thanks to breeders' dedicated ongoing efforts. You see it in the growing demand for bulls and baldy females. You hear it in industry conversations expressing a need for more maternal heterosis.

Hereford's strong foundation enables the current opportunity. This foundation includes the American Hereford Association (AHA), the committed leadership by the Board of Directors over time, the organization's enviable fiscal position and the cohesive vision illustrated by the AHA Strategic Plan.

The current five-year strategic plan began a year ago. Already much ground has been covered toward accomplishing the plan's goals.

Progress by design

Strategy 1: Capitalize on the value of Hereford-influenced commercial females.

The AHA continues to document the value of maternal heterosis and promote the breed's inherent genetic advantages, including docility, efficiency, fertility, longevity and sustainability. In addition to ongoing Hereford F1 research at the University of Illinois, the AHA initiated a research project with the University of Tennessee to quantify the economics associated with Hereford heterosis in the commercial sector.

The AHA committed resources to promoting the value of Hereford genetics through a targeted, regional promotion and communications strategy. This includes the introduction of the *Baldy Advantage* publication.

As well, AHA regional field staff are working with state affiliates and breeders to develop additional marketing opportunities through Hereford-influenced feeder calf and replacement female sales.

Strategy 2: Communicate and improve Hereford's sustainability story.

The AHA continues a multi-year research project with Colorado State University and AgNext to evaluate genetic differences for traits associated with greenhouse gas emissions and to develop selection tools for those traits. The research leverages years of existing data collection to further document Hereford genetic advantages

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relative to economic, social and environmental sustainability.

During the past year, Olsen Ranches, Harrisburg, Neb. — AHA's mainstay herd for the National Reference Sire Program — invested in enhancing individual feed intake systems while also installing new equipment to measure water intake. Previously, AHA invested in equipment used to gather and measure individual animal methane emissions.

Strategy 3: Fuel the growth of Certified Hereford Beef®.

Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) sales continue to grow incrementally, as does its exposure in the premium branded beef marketplace.

This past year, AHA invested — along with National Beef and the BlockTrust Network — in a pilot project exploring the utility of blockchain technology, utilizing cattle and data from the AHA Feedout programs. Successful demonstration

of the technology in this setting could open more markets to CHB by enabling further documentation and sharing of the sustainability benefits provided by Hereford-influenced beef carcasses.

Strategy 4: Increase demand for Hereford-influenced feeder cattle.

The AHA continues to increase awareness of the value of Hereford's ability to add production and economic efficiency through complementary crossbreeding while maintaining carcass quality.

AHA field staff and the AHA director of commercial programs also continue to expand opportunities for buyers and sellers of Hereford-influenced cattle through targeted communication with auction markets and developing more Hereford-influenced sales for feeder cattle and replacement females.

Strategy 5: Build a pipeline of future leaders.

The AHA conducted its first Hereford Seedstock Academy in September. This intensive multi-day program provides young Hereford breeders the opportunity to delve into how Hereford fits each sector of the beef industry while also learning more about AHA programs that can benefit their operations and their commercial customers. There will be a Hereford Seedstock Academy each year.

As well, the National Junior Hereford Association continues to build and enhance educational and leadership programs to benefit members.

Please see the AHA Annual Report with this issue of *Hereford World* for more information about the breed's position and progress. **HW**