

Beef Reigns Supreme

Hereford can leverage herd expansion.



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Primetime grilling season is fast approaching. Depending on the data source, nearly 60% of Americans grill during Memorial Day weekend and nearly 70% grill on Independence Day.

May is also Beef Month, which is a great time to highlight the importance of the beef industry and celebrate the cattlemen and women who work hard every day to raise and care for cattle while preserving the land and environment. The beef industry involves thousands of American farmers, ranchers and processors who help keep our economy strong and food on our tables.

The United States remained the world's largest beef producer last year and was the second-largest beef consumer with a per capita consumption of just over 57 pounds.

Despite historically high prices, domestic consumer beef demand continues to be extraordinarily resilient. The pandemic forced consumers to cook at home, and many continue to do so to stretch their food dollars and combat inflation.

Strong U.S. demand and consumption are tied to many factors, including safety and nutrition.

The U.S. food safety system is the world's gold standard. As for 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. Besides, beef is the first choice for many consumers when it comes to taste and eating satisfaction.

Rebuilding with efficiency

Maintaining U.S. beef production has never been an easy task. Recent prolonged, widespread drought and elevated input costs make it even tougher.

The U.S. beef cow herd began this year 2.5% smaller than a year earlier at 28.2 million head. That was about 11% less than the cyclical peak in 2019

and represented the fewest beef cows since 1961, according to Derrell Peel, Extension livestock marketing specialist at Oklahoma State University. The number of all cattle and calves in the U.S. as of Jan. 1 — 87.15 million head — was the fewest since 1951.

As producers rebuild the nation's cow herd, genetics will play a vital role as economics and society demand producers to be more efficient while providing a sustainable, dependable beef supply. Moreover, choice of breeding systems plays a pivotal role. The U.S. beef cow herd needs more maternal heterosis. It needs more crossbreeding with Hereford genetics.

Hereford's unique, inherent genetic advantages, compared to other breeds, offer added breed complementarity for docility, fertility, efficiency, longevity and production efficiency. Plus, Hereford genetics offer more crossbreeding power because they are the least related to other *Bos Taurus* breeds as documented by the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center.

Research consistently documents the advantage of Hereford-sired heifers and steers, including increased weaning weight and more calves per cow exposed.

Most recently, Charley Martinez, agricultural economist at the University of Tennessee, analyzed and modeled the difference between breeding a Hereford bull or an Angus bull to commercial Angus cows over 10 years. For a cow herd of 30 head, using a Hereford bull returned \$76 more net farm income per cow per year and \$1,326 more net worth per cow per year. For a cow herd of 500 head, the advantage of using a Hereford bull was \$90 more farm income per year and \$305 more net worth per cow per year.

Crossbreeding with Hereford is a logical and powerful way for producers to increase the efficiency and sustainability of the U.S. cow herd. **HW**