

Under the Hide

Find out how cattle perform beyond the pasture.

by *Wes Ishmael*

Buyers want to know as much as possible about prospective calves and feeder cattle to help with their purchase decisions. In turn, sellers with more information about their cattle can maximize the marketability of their offering.

“Every year, we see increased interest in these programs from our members and their customers because of the value they find in benchmarking feedlot and carcass performance in their programs and then tracking subsequent performance relative to their benchmark,” says Trey Befort, American Hereford Association (AHA) director of commercial programs.

Befort is referring to the AHA Hereford Feedout Program and the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Fed Steer Shootout, which provide Hereford breeders and commercial users of Hereford genetics a convenient, cost-effective opportunity to benchmark and track the feedlot and carcass performance of their cattle.

Participants can enroll a few head or entire pens of cattle. They receive ongoing updates about how their cattle are performing while on feed and then receive a collective summary of all cattle enrolled in the program to see how their cattle performed relative to the entire group.

All cattle are fed at HRC Feed Yards LLC, Scott City, Kan.

This year, 97 producers from 22 states enrolled more than 1,500 head in the programs.

Multiple benefits

“The value of this information and being closely engaged with the cattle feeding sector has always been important. It is becoming invaluable as more cattle are channeled into specification-based, value-added areas of the supply chain,” Befort says.

By learning their herd’s genetic potential and understanding what performance traits cattle feeders and

beef packers find the most valuable, producers can build a more effective marketing plan to make sounder marketing decisions year after year.

How to participate

The enrollment deadline for the next Hereford Feedout Program and Fed Steer Shootout is Nov. 1. Entered cattle must be delivered to HRC Feed Yards between Dec. 9-13.

Cattle must weigh a minimum of 600 pounds on arrival, be weaned for 45 days or more with two rounds of modified-live virus vaccinations (MLV). Specific recommended vaccination protocols are available upon request.

Participants in the Hereford Feedout Program enroll a minimum of five head of same-sex (steer or heifer) cattle for feeding within the designated delivery period.

Participants can enroll whole-pen groups outside of the designated delivery period. Cattle are marketed to National Beef.

Program participants gain access to the U.S. Premium Beef® grid and the opportunity to qualify cattle for the Certified Hereford Beef® program.

The Fed Steer Shootout is open to NJHA members who enroll individual steers or pens of three steers.

NJHA members enrolled in the Fed Steer Shootout can partake in additional educational activities, including Beef Quality Assurance certification.

All participants can attend an annual educational field day at HRC Feed Yards, which delves into various aspects of the cattle markets, cattle feeding and beef packing.

“These programs provide value to those who have never fed their cattle before and those who do so on a routine basis,” explains Bill Goehring, Libertyville, Iowa, AHA president — a Hereford breeder, commercial cow-calf producer, and sale barn owner and manager. “These programs are a convenient, cost-effective way for Hereford seedstock producers and their commercial customers to identify how their genetics perform in the feedlot and in the packinghouse. The data also adds increasing accuracy to the breed’s genetic evaluation.”

For more information about the Hereford Feedout Program, please visit Hereford.org/genetics/breed-improvement/feedout-program.

For more information about the Fed Steer Shootout, please see Hereford.org/youth/njha-fed-steer-shootout. **BA**



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