DRIVING **FORWARD TOGETHER**

World Hereford Council leaders reflect on the 19th World Hereford Conference.

by ***Wes Ishmael***

"While we all share a passion for Herefords and a drive to improve genetic performance through research and data-driven trials, it's collaboration that will help us reach our goals faster and strengthen us as a breed," says Posy Moody, general manager of New Zealand Herefords. "I genuinely believe we outperform other breed associations in our ability to work together — and we should make the most of that advantage."

Moody notes this spirit of teamwork is a key reason Hereford breeders should invest the resources to attend a World Hereford Conference (WHC). She was one of the 850 U.S. and international Hereford breeders who attended all or part of the 19th WHC in Kansas City, Mo., which also included tours before and after the main event. It was her third WHC.

"Every WHC event offers an opportunity to hear of new developments and scientific advances in research into animal husbandry," explains Larry Feeney, secretary general of the World Hereford Council. "It is therefore especially important in a challenging environment for cow-calf husbandry that Hereford breeders keep abreast of these advanced insights and developments in order to apply that knowledge where appropriate on returning home."

The World Hereford Council hosts delegates from member countries during the WHC to conduct official organization business. Feeney explains this year's agenda included financial reports, as well as discussions pertaining to gene editing and global regulations impacting genetic exchange.

"I have been fortunate to attend each World Hereford Conference — nine in all — held since 1992, which was in Cape Town, South Africa," Feeney says. "Each event has provided a new insight into the host country or into the extraordinary, varying conditions in which the Hereford breed continues to thrive and expand in a changing world."

WHC participants heard first-hand reports from World Hereford Council members about the breed's progress and opportunities in their respective countries. According to Feeney, the reports provided insight to the demands on the Hereford breed to perform across five continents and in various economic and climatic conditions.

"The WHC highlighted that Hereford cattle are known around the world for the same traits: temperament, longevity, fertility, weight for age and eating quality," says Hamish Chandler, CEO of Herefords Australia. "Hereford associations from all countries are dealing with the same topics, in particular growing market share for Hereford cattle." He notes the breed's rising popularity in the U.S. was especially evident at the event.

Progress through research

"The AHA and attendees at the conference were fortunate to have available so many highly respected individuals who are pioneers and leaders in their respective fields of research to share their insights with those in attendance," Feeney says, referring to the annual AHA Educational Forum. He notes the success and future promise of the multi-country Pan American Cattle Evaluation (PACE), which was shared during the Forum.

World Hereford Council delegates at the 19th World Hereford Conference in Kansas City, Mo.

Dale Venhuizen, chairman of the World Hereford Conference, welcomes delegates of the World Hereford Council.

Larry Feeney, secretary general of the World Hereford Council, attending his ninth World Hereford Conference.

"The *Evolution of American Hereford Association* research from 1999 through to 2025, outlined in the World Conference event guide, illustrates the huge body of work completed and still in progress," Feeney says. "No other Hereford Association in the world, particularly in Europe, has access to the resources necessary to engage in such an extensive research program. The AHA has generously offered access to this research and its promotional materials to the World Hereford Council members."

Celebrating member efforts

The AHA Annual Membership Meeting caught Feeney's eye, too, both in terms of the number of AHA members attending the event, and the time spent saluting member contributions to the progress and success of the Hereford breed across the U.S.

"Videos of individuals and family members talking of their experience of building up and maintaining their herds through good times and less prosperous times were inspiring," Feeney says. "So often, such dedication to the breed is only recognized when the individuals have passed on rather than when they are still in good health to enjoy the acclaim."

Championing young breeders

Similarly, Feeney says the International Young Breeders Competition (YBC), held in conjunction with WHC, offered an inspiring glimpse of the breed's future.

Building upon the first YBC in New Zealand, Feeney explains the event aims to encourage young Hereford breeders from around the world and help them hone their skills while learning from each other as they make new friends and establish new contacts across continents.

"All of the participating teams are to be congratulated on their performances and on their overall contribution to the event by their sheer presence," Feeney says. "It is perhaps a sobering thought that these young cattlemen could possibly be the last generation to engage in cattle husbandry, given the hostility to the livestock industry by certain elements of the climate lobby."

For perspective, Feeney notes the cattle population has declined by 7.5 million head in the European Union since 2015, including 250,000 fewer beef cows in Ireland.

"The AHA vision to build more pounds of quality beef and more production-efficient females with fewer resources, via the breed's inherent genetic advantages, gives much hope for the future," Feeney says.

Make plans for 2028

One other order of business for World Hereford Council delegates was to hear from the United Kingdom, which is planning to host the 20th World Hereford Conference in 2028.

"Surprisingly, this will be the first occasion the event has been held in Hereford, U.K. — considered the home of the breed — since the inaugural World Hereford Conference in 1951," Feeney says.

Closing the 19th WHC

"In an introduction letter printed in the WHC Conference Guide, I suggested the AHA had put together what promised to be a most informative, entertaining and exciting event," Feeney explains. "I am pleased to say that the actual event surpassed my expectations by a long shot. The contribution and support of sponsors in hosting such an event cannot be overlooked and is much appreciated. I found the AHA to be a very well-oiled machine that appeared to cover all the angles in an unflappable way. Staff moved through the attendance in a most unobtrusive way, quietly guided by executive vice president Jack Ward. A sincere thank you to Jack and his team for their dedication and tedious preparation." Feeney also extends thanks to Dale Venhuizen for his efforts serving as chairman of the event. HW