| by ***Sarah Beth Aubrey***

Celebrate What You Already Do

Keep in mind common practices that contribute to sustainability.

When thinking about sustainability, cattle producers sometimes overlook the things they already do that make a positive difference. Or we might hesitate to talk about sustainability because the word has become political. But when we call out the practices we've already adopted, we build trust with customers and show that beef producers are ahead of the curve. Many of these practices are commonplace but consider viewing them in a new light as you market, advertise sales, recruit interns and more.

Grazing practices serve as an example. Continuous grazing was common a generation ago. Today, many of us use rotational or adaptive grazing. Moving cattle intentionally translates into fewer purchased fertilizers, improved ground cover and stronger forages. This is a clear step forward in sustainability compared to what we were doing just a few years back.

The forages we use also illustrate advancement. Many of us have added legumes to pastures or seeded diverse forage mixes. Both seed mixes and application techniques have improved measurably compared to those of even 10 years ago. Hopefully, some of these management changes reduced fertilizer bills, too. They may not carry a "green" label, but they're meaningful conservation practices.

Likewise, animal health management continues to improve over time. Advancements in animal health products and their application mean today's cattle stay healthier and produce at higher levels than the cattle of previous generations. We know that healthy cattle convert feed more efficiently, gain faster and waste fewer resources. That's efficiency and sustainability rolled into one, and it shows just how much better management has become compared to decades past.

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Take credit for genetic improvement

As members of the American Hereford Association, we know genetics play a critical role in all that we do. But, when talking or marketing the sustainability of your operation, do you mention the things that we, as breeders, know are common?

For instance, we know that by using expected progeny differences (EPDs) and careful selection, breeders have made strides in feed efficiency, fertility and carcass quality. Producing more beef with fewer inputs is the ultimate efficiency gain, and it's something Hereford breeders have been leading in for years. Genetic improvement contributes greatly to sustainability. This is valuable to discuss with our customers and the public.

Finally, direct marketing beef and consumer connection are practices that have taken off in recent years. Whether selling beef directly to customers or sharing your ranch story online, these efforts build trust and transparency. Consumers value knowing where their beef comes from and how it's raised. When we share these details, we prove that we're responsible stewards of land and livestock.

All of this strengthens consumer trust. People want to feel confident in the food they buy, and our stories help provide that assurance. Plus, when we share what we do, we encourage other producers to do the same.

We are already practicing sustainability every day. By sharing photos, short stories or even quick notes about your grazing, herd health or genetic improvement, you promote your brand and the Hereford breed itself.

Let's continue the conversation. HW

Editor's Note: With Stepping into Sustainability, Sarah Beth Aubrey explores the rapidly evolving arena of sustainability. As she explains, "We know our business, and we know we're the best at what we do. It's time to step into sustainability and tell our story."

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