

Marching Forward

Commercial Hereford interest shines ever brighter.



Jack Ward is the executive vice president of the American Hereford Association. He can be reached at jward@hereford.org.

Spring is here. Many of us have moved our clocks forward and we're seeing longer days as many finish calving and turn their attention to breeding. This is always an exciting time when you glimpse the potential of newborn calves, see what you accomplished with previous breeding decisions and consider your plans for next year.

Hereford demand on display

As sale reports roll in from American Hereford Association (AHA) field staff, it is apparent that demand for Hereford genetics continues to grow. While writing this article, I received reports from two production sales, where the bulls averaged more than \$11,000.

Even more exciting is demand for the open commercial heifers in these sales. At one sale, 70 open F1 baldy females averaged \$3,608, and a smaller group of Hereford commercial females averaged \$4,025. At the other sale, 40 open F1 baldy heifers averaged \$3,800 and 40 open commercial Hereford heifers averaged \$3,900.

The same day, 350 head of replacement quality F1 open baldy heifers of different weights sold for \$3,149 to \$3,483 at an auction barn. The week before, more than 5,000 head sold in the Hereford-influence sale at Mitchell, S.D., with market tops represented across the offering. Congratulations to Jarrid Herrmann and the entire team at Mitchell Livestock Marketing, along with the breeders and consignors who continue to support the sale.

As U.S. cattle producers continue weighing the opportunities of higher feeder and fat cattle prices against the continuing challenges of higher input costs, it's very apparent that many of them recognize the importance of maternal heterosis and the role that Hereford plays as they consider retaining females or purchasing additional replacements.

I'm reminded of how Dan Shike summed up some of the advantages of the Hereford influence seen in the ongoing research at the University of Illinois, which compares breeding either Hereford bulls or Angus bulls to straight-bred commercial Angus females and retaining heifers.

Noting the 14% advantage in first-calf weaning rate of the Hereford-sired females at 2 years of age, Shike explained during the 2025 AHA Educational Forum, "In a 100-head cow herd, that's 14 more calves. If you put a \$2,000 price tag on each weaned calf, that's \$28,000. That's \$280 more per cow. That's a lot of dollars."

Sticking together

As opportunity grows to build back the national beef cow herd, Mother Nature always reminds us of challenges. For instance, the recent Ranger Road Fire in Oklahoma and Kansas burned thousands of acres across the Oklahoma Panhandle and into southern Kansas. Ranchers in the region reported significant cattle losses, with some operations describing hundreds of head of cattle killed or needing to be euthanized after the fire due to injuries.

Beyond the cattle losses, pastureland was severely damaged, ranch infrastructure was widely destroyed or damaged and many producers lost machinery and equipment. As in most cases in agriculture, the industry has stepped up with many from throughout the country organizing loads of feed, hay, fencing supplies and other materials needed to rebuild the area.

Amid the tragedy, we're reminded of why we're blessed to be part of the cattle community.

As we begin to enjoy spring, I wish each of you a very happy Easter. **HW**