

Celebrate and Remember

Hereford delivers what consumers want.



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May transitions from spring into summer. When days stretch longer, folks start heading back outdoors to put beef on the grill, and the nation celebrates National Beef Month. This federal designation recognizes the efforts of all who bring beef to dining tables in America and around the world.

With spring calving complete for many and preparations for the next breeding season beginning, National Beef month also serves as reminder of producers' enormous responsibility to feed and nourish a growing population with an incredibly wholesome product.

Beef tastes great, of course. It is also an excellent source of high-quality protein, iron and B vitamins, especially B-12. Beef is an important part of a healthy diet, as reinforced by the recently published *2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

As you will read in this issue of *Hereford World*, domestic consumer demand has never been stronger for animal protein, especially beef. Many of you realize current beef popularity was hard won, having lived through the 20 years between about 1990 and 2010 when beef demand declined approximately 1% per year. As producers deliberately focused on improving carcass quality, the tide began to turn.

For perspective, 84.5% of beef carcasses graded Choice and higher last year; 11.8% graded Prime and 12.5% graded Select. Compared to 2010, Choice was up 12.6%, Prime was 8.4% more and Select was 19% less. During the same period, carcasses grading in the upper two-third of Choice or higher increased by 8.1% to 31.6%.

Despite currently tight beef supplies and historically high retail prices, consumers continue demonstrating their willingness to pay more for beef of higher quality. Last year's Choice retail beef average value was \$2.84 per

pound more than in 2020 at \$9.38. The all-fresh retail beef average price was \$2.46 higher during the same period, reaching \$8.84 per pound last year.

All of this is why it is ever more important for producers to select for traits such as marbling, which add carcass quality and assurance that consumers enjoy a reliably great eating experience.

Answering the demand

Hereford breeders have certainly responded. Consider performance results of the 2024-born calves at Olsen Ranches Inc., Harrisburg, Neb., part of the National Reference Sire Program. As Shane Bedwell, American Hereford Association director of breed improvement and chief operating officer, described in April's *Performance Matters*, 90% of those calves at Olsen Ranches graded in the upper two-thirds of Choice and 31% graded Prime.

More importantly, Hereford breeders have increased carcass quality without sacrificing maternal strength, efficiency or disposition. Breeders have improved udder quality and teat size at the same time. In other words, Hereford breeders have done a great job of focusing on all traits of economic relevance.

Saluting sacrifice

May is also when we recognize those who gave their lives in service to the U.S. The final Monday in May is recognized as Memorial Day and is one of the most meaningful observances in the nation. It embodies deep historical, cultural and emotional significance.

During difficult times and some unrest around the world, Memorial Day offers a shared moment for all to come together, regardless of background or beliefs, to reflect on common values like service, sacrifice and resilience. **HW**