Performance Matters

Spiral Up

by **Shane Bedwell**

Phenotypes advance genetic prediction reliability.

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Last month, I shared the latest progeny performance data from sires evaluated in the National Reference Sire Program (NRSP) at Olsen Ranches Inc. in Harrisburg, Neb. I've received several comments since then, recognizing the completeness and competitiveness of the bulls. The group is remarkable in how they set the curve for genetic progress and represent relevant sires that are sure to be in pedigrees for generations.

This set of bulls ranks in the top 15% for the Certified Hereford Beef® Index (CHB$). As impressively, the bulls rank in the top 13% for the Baldy Maternal Index (BMI$) and in the top 20% for teat size (TEAT) and udder suspension (UDDR) expected progeny differences (EPDs). The notion that you must sacrifice certainly doesn't apply to this set of bulls.

I encourage you to review the bulls, starting on Page 24 of the April *Hereford World*, where you will find complete results.

Continual accuracy improvement

It is always interesting to evaluate how each bull's indexes compare before and after inclusion of the NRSP progeny performance data.

For instance, there is a 0.85 rank correlation between the bulls' CHB$ before actual carcass data and feed intake data were added and afterward. Even though the range and spread in the actual CHB$ changed, the rank correlation was virtually the same before and after actual carcass and feed intake data were included.

In the world of genetics, a rank correlation of 0.80 or more is regarded as essentially the same trait. This example should reinforce Hereford breeders' confidence that the genetic evaluation is getting it right, for the most part, when it comes to predictions of hard-to-measure traits. It also underscores the importance of phenotype collection. The genetic rank correlation is so strong in this example because of phenotypes gathered by breeders and through programs, like the NRSP, Hereford Feedout Program and the National Junior Hereford Association Fed Steer Shootout.

Commitment to collecting these phenotypes will continue to separate the American Hereford Association (AHA) and its members from those who believe genomics alone represent a proverbial silver bullet. Also keep in mind — the AHA genetic evaluation has been anchored by Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) since 2001.

CHB genetic excellence

The *Certified Hereford Beef* Sire of Distinction (CHBS) program recognizes breed-leading carcass performance bulls. As more carcass and scan records have been added to the AHA genetic evaluation over time, more animals are stacked generationally making them better connected to carcass and/or scan data through pedigree. Consequently, accuracy levels have increased for ribeye area (REA) and marbling (MARB) EPDs of non-parents.

CHBS designees must achieve a minimum accuracy of 0.25 for both REA and MARB and be in the top 25% for the CHB$. Beginning this year, CHBS must also have a minimum of five scan and/or one carcass progeny used in the AHA's genetic evaluation. This new requirement helps ensure CHBS have reliable accuracy, no matter the age of the sire. This, too, illustrates the importance of collecting phenotypes. You will find the latest list of CHBS beginning on Page 30 in this issue.

As always, keep them sound. HW

You're invited!

Plan to attend the 2026 Beef Improvement Federation Research Symposium and Convention June 1-4 in Boise, Idaho. For early-bird registration and the schedule, visit *BeefImprovement.org/2026-symposium/2026-schedule.* HW