Hereford Demand Grows

Prices climb higher and higher.

by ***Sydnee Shive***

Positive market fundamentals, including the historically meager national beef cow herd, in tandem with historically strong domestic consumer beef demand, continue driving cattle and beef prices to previously unimagined heights. Bull prices have followed suit for many breeds, and especially for Hereford bulls, which have steadily increased since 2020 (Table 1).

"We hear the cattle aren't out there. It's for real. And it's driven us to these price levels," says Joel Birdwell, auctioneer. Birdwell also operates Birdwell Ranch alongside his family near Fletcher, Okla. "Producers are seeing the value in these cattle, and they're giving what it takes to buy them."

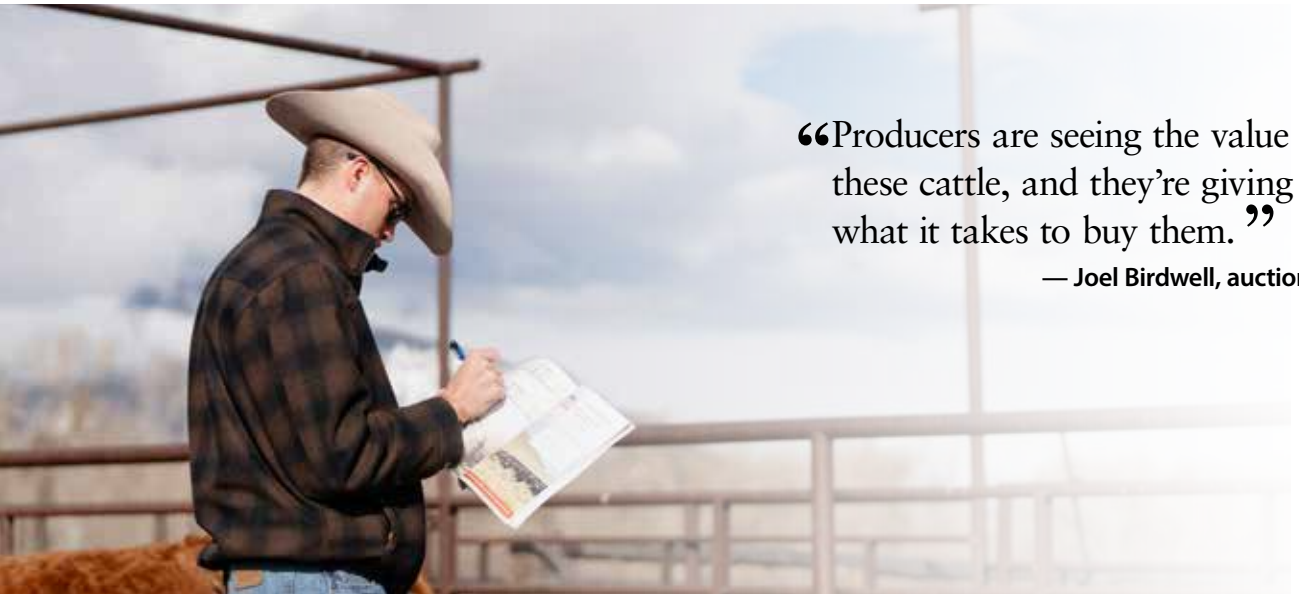
Since this year began, buyers have paid an average price of $11,593 for Hereford bulls at auction, based on data reported by American Hereford Association (AHA) field staff. This figure is 102% percent higher than it was in 2021. Accounting for inflation, the price is still higher than the previous peak in 2015. Females are selling high too, sitting at an average of $8,461 so far this year. Between 2024 and 2025, Hereford bull sale averages increased by 26%, and female sale averages by 44% (Table 1).

Between 2021 and 2025, Hereford breeders sold 11% more bulls for an average price that was 53% higher (Table 2). The female numbers also reflect industry trends. The number of females sold between 2021 and 2025 decreased by 18%, while the average price increased by 99%.

Stronger Hereford demand everywhere

Although average price increases vary by region, buyers have continued paying more for Hereford bulls and females in all regions for the past three decades, especially during the last five years.

The AHA's eastern region — Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida — has seen prices



> "Producers are seeing the value in these cattle, and they're giving what it takes to buy them."
>
> **— Joel Birdwell, auctioneer**

advance the most for bulls, compared to other regions. From 2021 to 2025, breeders in the region sold 29% more bulls for 62% more (Table 2).

Tommy Mead owns Mead Cattle Enterprises in Midville, Ga., and has bred Hereford cattle for more than 40 years. He's seen the uptick in demand, especially among commercial cattlemen.

"We have such an opportunity here," Mead says. "We've got the Brahman, Brangus and Angus cattle. The Hereford is an ideal bull to go on all of them, and they're realizing that."

"The commercial producers buying bulls — they have really stepped up and given what they need to give," Birdwell says.

The central region, which includes Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Minnesota, along with the eastern region, have seen the most overall price improvement since 2021. All Hereford cattle in the regions sold for 77% more last year than they did in 2021 (Table 2).

Average prices for Hereford females over the last five years increased the most in the mountain-region states of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota and South Dakota — a whopping 205% price increase on 67% more females from 2021 to 2025. Keep in mind, about $9.6 million of the region's total female sales last year came from the dispersal of Churchill Cattle Co., Manhattan, Mont., a once in a lifetime event. The Churchill dispersal also increased the overall 2025 female average by about $1,400.

While the historic Hereford prices so far in 2026 are obviously linked to higher overall cattle prices, there is no question that expanding demand is also playing a role.

"I think that is a credit to Hereford breeders because they have paid attention to some of the economically important traits that drive the industry," Birdwell says. "They have focused

continued on page 62...

Table 1 — All Hereford Sales 2025-1995

		Bulls					Females					Total				
Year	No. Sales	Lots	Change	Gross	Avg.	Change	Lots	Change	Gross	Avg.	Change	Lots	Change	Gross	Avg.	Change
2025	191	7,334.75	0%	$64,385,171	$8,778	26%	4,865.50	-9%	$41,921,070	$8,616	44%	12,200.25	-4%	$106,306,241	$8,713	33%
2024	211	7,320.07	9%	$50,977,484	$6,964	9%	5,328.49	-9%	$31,798,164	$5,968	17%	12,648.56	1%	$82,775,648	$6,544	13%
2023	201	6,691.55	0%	$42,671,363	$6,377	7%	5,870.00	15%	$29,921,644	$5,097	7%	12,561.55	6%	$72,593,007	$5,779	7%
2022	206	6,713.50	1%	$39,829,880	$5,933	3%	5,105.75	-14%	$24,229,053	$4,745	10%	11,819.25	-6%	$64,058,933	$5,420	7%
2021	206	6,617.50	5%	$38,018,305	$5,745	18%	5,906.00	17%	$25,580,428	$4,331	10%	12,523.50	11%	$63,598,733	$5,078	14%
2020	190	6,280.66	-4%	$30,476,420	$4,852	2%	5,041.00	-22%	$19,878,210	$3,943	14%	11,321.66	-13%	$50,354,630	$4,448	8%
2019	209	6,558.08	-4%	$31,185,614	$4,755	-3%	6,443.25	7%	$22,259,555	$3,455	-11%	13,001.33	1%	$53,445,169	$4,111	-7%
2018	186	6,833.34	-2%	$33,345,368	$4,880	-1%	6,048.50	3%	$23,441,572	$3,876	-7%	12,881.84	0%	$56,786,940	$4,408	-4%
2017	201	6,986.00	2%	$34,449,363	$4,931	-9%	5,878.66	6%	$24,458,736	$4,161	-13%	12,864.66	3%	$58,908,099	$4,579	-11%
2016	195	6,869.00	6%	$37,174,880	$5,412	-21%	5,572.00	-3%	$26,520,323	$4,760	-13%	12,441.00	1%	$63,695,203	$5,120	-17%
2015	196	6,497.91	9%	$44,466,398	$6,843	22%	5,762.00	5%	$31,373,536	$5,445	10%	12,259.41	7%	$75,839,934	$6,186	17%
2014	186	5,952.41	4%	$33,509,582	$5,630	20%	5,480.00	-9%	$27,009,321	$4,929	11%	11,431.91	-2%	$60,518,903	$5,294	15%
2013	180	5,747.22	3%	$27,061,147	$4,709	-1%	5,998.50	15%	$26,543,059	$4,425	12%	11,693.22	8%	$53,604,206	$4,584	5%
2012	176	5,581.00	10%	$26,572,433	$4,761	17%	5,207.50	-4%	$20,569,948	$3,950	23%	10,788.00	3%	$47,142,381	$4,370	20%
2011	174	5,073.81	12%	$20,600,460	$4,060	21%	5,423.50	-1%	$17,377,734	$3,204	6%	10,447.31	5%	$37,978,194	$3,635	15%
2010	157	4,510.41	2%	$15,086,769	$3,345	5%	5,462.50	9%	$16,436,186	$3,009	23%	9,972.91	6%	$31,522,955	$3,161	13%
2009	161	4,426.59	1%	$14,130,206	$3,192	-3%	5,018.75	-10%	$12,242,277	$2,439	-12%	9,445.34	-5%	$26,372,483	$2,792	-7%
2008	177	4,401.33	0%	$14,449,520	$3,283	7%	5,584.50	20%	$15,425,975	$2,762	-1%	9,985.83	10%	$29,875,495	$2,992	2%
2007	169	4,415.83	-3%	$13,521,261	$3,062	0%	4,670.50	-3%	$13,091,784	$2,803	-4%	9,086.33	-3%	$26,613,045	$2,929	-2%
2006	167	4,544.95	2%	$13,959,702	$3,071	2%	4,816.00	3%	$14,033,744	$2,914	0%	9,360.95	3%	$27,993,446	$2,990	1%
2005	156	4,441.53	14%	$13,369,820	$3,010	7%	4,675.75	14%	$13,612,056	$2,911	15%	9,117.28	14%	$26,981,876	$2,959	11%
2004	136	3,888.49	-15%	$10,928,170	$2,810	15%	4,086.50	-29%	$10,319,532	$2,525	20%	7,974.99	-22%	$21,247,702	$2,664	18%
2003	167	4,553.91	0%	$11,157,741	$2,450	6%	5,721.50	7%	$12,015,770	$2,100	12%	10,275.41	4%	$23,173,511	$2,255	9%
2002	167	4,550.49	-7%	$10,539,701	$2,316	-1%	5,347.00	18%	$10,023,687	$1,875	-1%	9,897.49	5%	$20,563,388	$2,078	-2%
2001	167	4,869.00	-9%	$11,359,596	$2,333	3%	4,536.00	-19%	$8,629,238	$1,902	14%	9,405.00	-14%	$19,988,834	$2,125	8%
2000	178	5,348.76	-2%	$12,107,748	$2,264	8%	5,580.25	-1%	$9,306,243	$1,668	12%	10,929.01	-2%	$21,413,991	$1,959	10%
1999	183	5,454.74	-11%	$11,384,017	$2,087	3%	5,663.50	-21%	$8,425,206	$1,488	-1%	11,118.24	-16%	$19,809,223	$1,782	2%
1998	228	6,100.17	-10%	$12,362,155	$2,027	-1%	7,193.08	-6%	$10,844,270	$1,508	0%	13,293.25	-8%	$23,206,425	$1,746	-1%
1997	244	6,793.33	-5%	$13,941,765	$2,052	16%	7,659.75	18%	$11,508,605	$1,502	22%	14,453.08	6%	$25,450,370	$1,761	17%
1996	258	7,130.50	-18%	$12,583,890	$1,765	-10%	6,508.00	-18%	$8,021,385	$1,233	-10%	13,638.50	-18%	$20,605,275	$1,511	-10%
1995	298	8,727.50	N/A	$17,034,906	$1,952	N/A	7,912.25	N/A	$10,843,775	$1,371	N/A	16,639.75	N/A	$27,878,681	$1,675	N/A

...continued from page 61

more on those. I think that's showing up in the market share that they're getting."

While the U.S. beef cow herd expansion remains stymied to slow, depending on the data considered, Birdwell says calving-ease bulls sold especially high through the spring sale season.

"I think that's a reflection of people wanting to breed more heifers and the cow numbers that are at all-time lows. Whether heifer retention has started or not, I don't know," Birdwell says. "But you could certainly say there's something going on because calving-ease bulls were definitely at a premium."

Demand for heterosis

"Guys have seen the value in the baldy female," Birdwell says. "I'm not so sure that's not the easiest thing to sell in the entire cattle industry. It's easy to sell them wherever you go. That's what I keep hearing and keep seeing."'

Whether they're black, red or tiger striped, baldy females are in high demand across the country, as are the calves they produce. Mead also credits increased demand for the bald face to Hereford-influenced calf, feeder cattle and replacement female sales developed by Hereford breeders across the nation.

"We're able to sell more bulls for more money," Mead says. "And the reason is, if a person sells those feeder calves, or he sells that white-faced calf, regardless of what the mother is, if he's 50% Hereford and he weighs more and he doesn't get a discount, they're going to stay with us or come back to us. I see that driving the bull market for the rest of us. If we can sell our bulls, the rest is easy."

The central vision of the AHA's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is to establish Hereford genetics as the essential component of the U.S. cowherd. Hereford breeders are making this vision a reality. Mead is just one of many producers who touts the increased demand for the bald face from commercial cattlemen.

"It's not your established breeders that are buying a lot of these cattle right now," Mead says. "There's a high percentage of people that are just upgrading their bulls, and they're coming home to Hereford.

"We've got a product they can come back to. Buyers don't give up marbling, and they can correct a lot of attitude and doability. The calves are still going to gain weight and be the most efficient cattle. Producers are not losing anything by coming back to Hereford. I think that's where we've really excelled as Hereford breeders, especially in the last 12 years. We've got the cattle that'll marble and feed well and be low birth weight."

Study the sale averages, and it's clear commercial producers are willing to pay more for cattle that are stamped for more. **HW**

Editor's Note: These statistics were gathered using sales reported in *Hereford World* by American Hereford Association field representatives.

Table 2 — Regional Hereford Sales 2021-2025

			Bull						Female						Total					
	No. Sales		Lots		Change	Avg.		Change	Lots		Change	Avg.		Change	Lots		Change	Avg.		Change
Terr.	2021	2025	2021	2025		2021	2025		2021	2025		2021	2025		2021	2025		2021	2025	
1	16	17	875.00	789.25	-10%	$5,113	$7,747	52%	286.00	195.00	-32%	$5,675	$7,469	32%	1,161.00	984.25	-15%	$5,251	$7,692	46%
2	34	38	1,944.25	2,397.50	23%	$6,911	$10,056	46%	541.00	903.00	67%	$4,811	$14,694	205%	2,485.25	3,300.50	33%	$6,454	$11,325	75%
3	40	35	1,812.75	1,795.50	-1%	$5,469	$8,643	58%	1,639.00	829.50	-49%	$3,531	$6,771	92%	3,451.75	2,625.00	-24%	$4,549	$8,052	77%
5	39	28	195.25	210.50	8%	$3,951	$5,294	34%	1,164.50	744.00	-36%	$3,859	$5,977	55%	1,359.75	954.50	-30%	$3,872	$5,826	50%
7	31	32	427.17	552.17	29%	$4,963	$8,055	62%	889.00	1,086.00	22%	$4,047	$7,475	85%	1,316.17	1,638.17	24%	$4,345	$7,670	77%
9	40	35	1,250.33	1,415.00	13%	$5,290	$8,162	54%	1,162.50	1,028.50	-12%	$5,572	$8,054	45%	2,412.83	2,443.50	1%	$5,425	$8,116	50%
Total (includes Canadian sales not included in the regional figures above)																				
	206	191	6,617.50	7,334.75	11%	$5,745	$8,778	53%	5,906.00	4,865.50	-18%	$4,331	$8,616	99%	12,523.50	12,200.25	-3%	$5,078	$8,713	72%

Territory 1 - Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Arizona; **Territory 2 -** Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado; **Territory 3 -** Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri; **Territory 5 -** Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland; **Territory 7 -** Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi; **Territory 9 -** Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana