Breed Focus

Measured Progress

by **Jack Ward**

Hereford momentum grows.



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

Demand for Hereford genetics continues to expand, underscored by registered bulls and females selling for historically high prices. Increased demand is also reflected by registration growth through the American Hereford Association (AHA). Registrations were 7% more year over year in fiscal year 2026 (FY 26), which ended Sept. 30. The AHA Hereford Cow Inventory grew 2% during the same period. These gains are magnified when considering the nation's beef cow herd continued contracting during that time.

Breed growth stems from preparation intersecting industry need. AHA's current *Long Range Strategic Plan* developed five years ago defines innovative strategies and initiatives to achieve the organization's mission to: "Establish Hereford genetics as the essential component of the U.S. beef cow herd."

The AHA Board and staff have worked diligently and deliberately since then to accomplish the *Strategic Plan's* vision and mission. New and ongoing results of these efforts were abundant during the last fiscal year.

Intentional steps

For instance, the new AHA national ad campaign — "Stamped for More" — launched in August. It highlights Hereford's inherent genetic strengths and their value in commercial cow herds, while also boosting direct and maternal heterosis through complementary crossbreeding systems. I encourage you to visit the AHA website (*Hereford.org*) and look under the "Commercial" tab, where you can learn about the documented research supporting the campaign. Click the "Media" tab for sale catalog inserts, ads, testimonials and other opportunities to share the Hereford story.

Certainly, hosting the World Hereford Conference in October 2025 was an extraordinary milestone. Years went into planning and executing the event, which drew 850 Hereford breeders from 20 countries and 40 states for educational sessions and tours that showcased U.S. genetics, breed research and marketing efforts. Once again, I commend the AHA staff for their efforts in organizing such a successful event.

You will find other highlights from FY 26 in the *AHA Annual Report* with this issue of *Hereford World*, including ongoing innovative research and commercial and junior program success.

Strong start

AHA's new fiscal year began with the fourth annual Seedstock Academy, which welcomed eight young breeders from seven states for an intensive week of networking, education and engagement with leaders from across the beef supply chain (see Page 32).

Incidentally, the Seedstock Academy is another initiative born out of the *Strategic Plan* to build a pipeline of breed and industry leaders.

The new year also introduced 1881 Creative, a rebrand of Hereford Publications Inc., which elevates marketing services and opportunities for AHA members and other industry stakeholders.

As you plan your marketing for 2027, I encourage you to visit with 1881 Creative staff and AHA field representatives to explore the opportunities available to tell your own story and help market your genetics.

Members lead

Of course, AHA members' commitment to breed improvement makes all of this possible. Your diligence in crafting genetics that provide industry solutions continues to cleave new opportunities for the breed. HW