Performance Matters

Stand Up for Value

by **Shane Bedwell**

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Help your customers benefit.

Hereford-influenced calves, feeder cattle and replacement females continue to drive enthusiasm and profit opportunity at sale barns across the country as their numbers continue to increase.

I received a phone call this fall sale season, which illustrates how much industry perceptions are changing, due to how breeders continue improving genetics for commercial producers and how commercial users of Hereford genetics use and manage them.

The call was from a man who recently purchased several loads of feeder cattle at an auction market. A group of baldies came into the ring. There happened to be a feather-neck Hereford in the group. As usual, at this particular market, the barn owner announced, "We'll cut off the red one on their way out, so you're just buying the black baldies."

After the man calling me won the bid, the sale barn owner reminded the crew to sort off the red one. That's when our buyer yelled, "Stop! Leave the red steer; he's the best one in the group."

A fellow bidder from a few rows down turned and acknowledged him with a wide grin. I've been grinning every time I remember the phone call. The gentleman who bought the calves knew their value because of the reputation of the health and genetics associated with the operation selling them. He wasn't going to discount the seller or miss out on one of the best steers in the lot.

Retrieve the added value

The Hereford breed has made so much progress. I believe it's incredibly important to work with your customers to make sure they realize how much progress has been made and how much added value the genetics represent. If you aren't already, help your customers market their cattle to full potential.

For instance, some sale barns work for the seller and some work for the buyer. I've found very few over the years that work for both. Now more than ever, it is important to help your customers get connected with a firm that is going to work for them as the seller. Otherwise, those long hours of dedicated breeding and genetic improvement can simply be wasted.

Hereford breeders, it is time to take a stand on the market value of Hereford and Hereford-influenced feeder cattle. American Hereford Association field staff and marketing representatives have worked hard to develop relationships with auction markets that understand the value of Hereford and Hereford-influenced cattle and want to market them. There is no sense to continue doing business with markets willing to undercut the value of modern-day Hereford cattle.

If your customers don't have access to a Hereford-friendly auction market, consider buying some of these cattle yourself and retaining ownership in them. This has proven a winning strategy for some Hereford breeders who ensure calves built with their genetics receive the most value possible. Their bull customer wins, and they win.

Keep in mind the Hereford Feedout Programs mean you can retain ownership and feed a trailer-load of cattle or entire pens at HRC Feed Yards LLC in Scott City, Kan.

Despite current market turbulence, I believe there will continue to be profitable opportunities in feeding cattle. Even if it winds up being an economic wash, you have the chance to support valued bull customers while discovering or adding valuable data about your genetics and selection decisions. That sounds like a win to me.

As always, keep them sound. HW