

Global Hereford Values



World Hereford Conference comes to America in October.

by Riley Greiten and Wes Ishmael

Cattle producers across the globe share more in common than otherwise. The ways of production differ, but the underlying goal of caring for land and cattle to help feed the world is the same. Likewise, beef cattle seedstock producers use similar tools to craft curve-bending genetics.

“In my travels around the world, it has been very interesting and inspiring to see the common opportunities and underlying passion for Hereford genetics, no matter the country,” explains Jack Ward, American Hereford Association (AHA) executive vice president.

Likewise, Larry Feeney, past CEO of the Irish Hereford Breed Society says, “There is, to a large extent, little difference in cattle breeders across the world. They are generally very happy to talk cattle and share information with others, in addition to welcoming people to view their stock.”

Feeney is currently secretary of the World Hereford Council, which was established in 1951. The first World Hereford Conference (WHC) was held that same year in England, Hereford’s birthplace, at Herefordshire and the West Midlands.

Since then, Hereford breeders from across the globe have gathered every four years for a WHC (except for the pandemic interruption), where they swap information about the breed’s ongoing evolution as it serves the beef industry. In 2025, the U.S. will host the WHC for the third time, in conjunction with the AHA Annual Meeting and Educational Forum and the American Royal. Specifically, the WHC takes place Oct. 23-26 in Kansas City, Mo., with breeder tours available before and after the conference.

Plan to be part of history

“We’ve been building this program for more than four years, and we’re really excited to share so much new information with our members and Hereford breeders from around the world,” says Shane Bedwell, AHA director of breed improvement and chief operations officer. “We’ll be sharing results from two large, multi-year research projects that we believe are going to help propel Hereford genetics forward globally for the next decades.”

Bedwell explains one project with the University of Illinois tracks the value of maternal heterosis across generations in Hereford-sired black baldy females, compared to commercial Angus females. He explains this industry-first comprehensive quantification and analysis holds great promise for commercial cow-calf producers here and abroad.

“While crossbreeding currently might be more common in North America than in other parts of the world, we’re excited to share with other countries the benefits of direct and maternal heterosis to the commercial sector,” Ward says.

The other project is pioneering cooperative research with Colorado State University and AgNext, which explores genetic differences for greenhouse gas emissions, its association with production efficiency and potential selection tools.

Feeney has attended the World Hereford Conference in eight different countries, learning from many cattle producers. As consumers across the globe level increased scrutiny on cattle production and its role in the environment, he says it is vital for producers to focus on efficiency and applicable new technologies.

At the first WHC in 1951, discussions varied from veterinary regulations to polled and horned cattle being registered in the same herd book. This year,

breeders will hear about a variety of topics, including sustainability and the role Hereford cattle play.

In 1951, attendees participated in herd tours, visiting herds in Herefordshire and the West Midlands region. This year, participants can attend a pre-tour in Big Sky Country, and two post-tours — Sandhill Sights and Mountain Views and Southbound to Cowtown.

You can find the WHC schedule at WorldHerefordConference.com.

Spiral up

Amid new and shared information, the WHC often serves as a source of direction.

For instance, Craig Huffhines, former AHA executive vice president, was AHA director of Certified Hereford Beef®, when the U.S. last hosted the WHC in 1996.

“The World Hereford Conference creates those relational connections, and it is just really important to have global relationships today, for bigger reasons than just Hereford cattle.”

— Craig Huffhines,
former AHA executive vice president

“I think what that 1996 conference did was put a spotlight on the end product and what the genetics were doing for the breed and for the industry,” Huffhines says. “We came out of that with a mission to change the composition of Hereford cattle.” He explains the conference pushed carcass quality standards for Hereford to the forefront.

Similarly, Stacy Sanders, AHA director of records, journeyed to Australia to attend the 14th annual WHC. His trip began with a meeting to discuss the founding of the Pan American Cattle Evaluation (PACE), comprised by Hereford breed registries in Argentina, Canada, Uruguay and the U.S. PACE provided its first genetic evaluation in 2009.

Sanders, who has also attended a WHC in Denmark, says the experience for those who attend is eye opening in terms of seeing how producers operate in other countries, exploring common opportunities and identifying new genetics.

“We have great genetics in the U.S., but in a lot of these other countries there are generally some genetics that might expand the gene pool in the U.S.,” Sanders says.

It’s all about perspective.

“The World Hereford Conference creates those relational connections, and it is just really important



WHC Hosts Young Breeders Competition

Added excitement comes to the World Hereford Conference in October with the Young Breeders Competition (YBC). It features teams of four young Hereford breeders, 18-26 years of age, nominated by World Hereford Council member countries. Teams compete in events such as cattle evaluation, fitting and showmanship, meat and carcass evaluation, public speaking and general beef industry knowledge.

The YBC will take place Oct. 19-26 at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan., and at the American Royal, in Kansas City, Mo. The complete schedule is available at WorldHerefordConference.com.

Team USA applications close April 15

Team USA will showcase the best young people the U.S. has to offer during the Young Breeders Competition. The Hereford Youth Foundation of America has scholarships available for two teams. Scholarships will cover contest registration fees, lodging, travel expenses and meals throughout the duration of the competition.

Special thanks go to the OXO World Traveler Scholarship Fund and the newly established Cottonwood Springs Farm Global Education and Leadership Grants program.

Applicants must be between the ages of 18–26 years old (not older than 26 years or younger than 18 on the first day of the competition). Applicants should have multiple years of experience in the beef industry and a well-rounded knowledge base in the competition categories. Applications are due April 15 and are available at HerefordYouthFoundation.submittable.com. The final teams will be announced at the 2025 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo. **HW**

to have global relationships today, for bigger reasons than just Hereford cattle,” Huffhines explains.

“We look forward to hosting our international friends and extending to them the same sort of gracious hospitality they afford to us,” Ward says. **HW**