



## Association COMMENTARY

by R.L. "Bob" Hough, Ph.D.  
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North American Limousin Foundation

Over the past 15 years, the Limousin breed's fortunes have been on a decline. We have gone from being the third most popular breed to the eighth. We can trace the breed's fall to a number of problems, which include the rise in demand for branded, premium-Choice beef; a lack of breedwide uptake of performance programs; possibly ineffective breed promotion; or a simple product-quality problem.

Currently, we have fallen behind our major competitors in percentage of weaning weights collected and ultrasound records. We know we have temperament and grading problems, so we developed docility and marbling score expected progeny differences (EPDs), but some of our high-use artificial insemination (AI) sires still rank low for those traits. In an effort to put more rib and ease of fleshing into our cattle (something we must do), we also must make sure we do not compromise the breed's muscling.

We must face the fact that, although we have realized the weaknesses of our breed, we have not totally fixed them. We can feel sorry for ourselves and about our situation, or we can be proactive, fix our problems and go about restoring our popularity. For me, the path is simple, and that is the proactive path of restoring breed popularity.

That is what the January 11 session on strategic planning at the annual meeting, starting at 8 a.m. at the Doubletree Hotel, is all about. It is important that the membership take an active role in the plan so we can obtain the best strategies to lead the breed forward. Instead of the customary breakout sessions people are used to, the room will be set up in interactive roundtables so small groups can discuss topics then report back to the whole gathering. I am very pleased that Jim McKinlay will be facilitating the strategic planning session.

Jim is a founding member and a managing partner in the Haines Centre for Strategic Management, a worldwide consulting firm, and he has more than 25 years experience as a consultant and trainer to business and government in Canada, the United States, Australia and Jamaica.

Jim is the co-author of the book *Enterprise-Wide Change: Superior Results Through Systems Thinking*. He has strong skills in strategic planning, change management, human-resource

management and leadership development. He was a Banff Centre for Management faculty member from 1996 to 2001 and has a master's degree in human-resource development.

The timing is right for Limousin to make its comeback. Registrations have leveled off. Our top-end cattle can stand up with any in the industry. The industry is in desperate need of a heavy-muscled, easy-calving, moderate-framed, moderate-milking Continental breed alternative, which Limousin fits perfectly. Our cattle can fit into a mainstream crossbreeding system and bring outstanding feed efficiency to the plate. We can take care of Yield Grade (YG) 4 problems in one cross, and research has demonstrated that no breed can compete with Limousin on efficiently producing pounds of red-meat yield.

According to Frank Padilla, NALF director of member and commercial relations, the feeder-calf market for quality Limousin-influenced calves has remained strong. That is especially true for the Lim-Flex<sup>®</sup>-type calves.

Harking back to last month's "Association Commentary," having a strong presence in the feeder-cattle market is key to our breed's success. We must build our renewed popularity on a solid foundation of feeder-cattle demand and commercial bull sales. At our breed's founding, people bought memberships and semen purely on speculation, and the breed thrived. We cannot long for the good old days because, in the 21st century, beef-industry speculation no longer builds a breed. Bull sales to commercial producers build a breed.

To accomplish that goal, we must have a trouble-free breed that offers its strengths to a crossbreeding system without adding disproportionate weaknesses. The Limousin breed must then back that up with excellent customer service and commercial marketing programs. If we are to go after progressive customers, we must have cutting-edge breeding tools, such as our genetic predictions.

Simply put, we must strive to be the best in the business. That is what we are going to discuss January 11 at the annual meeting. For everyone interested in the future of this great breed, I urge you to participate.

**LW**