



Foundation COMMENTARY

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This year's Limousin events at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) were great. We started Friday with a smooth check-in and packed Board meeting, and we ended with truly motivational pen and carload shows in the Yards.

Anyone who saw the 34 pens and carloads walked away excited about the breed. The bulls were excellent phenotypically, and they had excellent expected progeny differences (EPDs) supporting them. I was very pleased with the way the judges balanced phenotype and objective data to arrive at their placings, resulting in extremely useful cattle working their way to the top. One of the largest representatives for Superior Livestock Auction was there, and he told me he was impressed with the quality of the bulls. Reports are that activity in the Yards was strong, with one breeder telling me he sold 62 bulls! For those who left Denver early, you missed quite an event.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Bob Millerberg, who finished his second term as NALF president. Being president of a major breed association is a big job and takes a huge commitment of time and energy. Bob made that sacrifice for the betterment of the breed and did an excellent job. Also leaving the Board were Bob Mitchell and Wendell Geeslin. Both have been wonderful to work with and true workhorses. Bob Mitchell also was honored as Commercial Marketing Booster of the Year, which shows the depth of his dedication. We also lost a very good staff member, Frank Padilla, who had a chance to take a promotion with another breed association. We wish him the best of luck.

Winning this year's Limousin Promoter of the Year award was Scott Coakley of Laura's Lean Beef Co. (LLB). Scott and LLB have been true friends and allies of the Limousin breed. They not only procure a substantial number of natural feeder and finished Limousin cattle, but they have also come out with exciting new bull-buyback opportunities and new opportunities to source cattle with Meyer Natural Angus (MNA). Although, as a breed, we want to penetrate more into the mainstream market, that will not lessen our commitment to supplying Scott and LLB with increasing numbers of high-quality Limousin cattle. We encourage cow-calf producers to look at keeping their cattle natural so they have that market option.

Winning the Commercial Producer of the Year award were Mike and Betsy Cravens of Missouri. That is a very prestigious award, and they use the latest genetic tools available to make their operation more profitable. NALF will

proudly nominate them for the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Commercial Producer of the Year to be awarded this summer in Columbia, Missouri.

One of the important events that occurred for the North American Limousin Foundation (NALF) was at our Annual Meeting. We took a frank look at our strengths and weaknesses as a breed and as an organization and what it will take to return Limousin to its rightful place of prominence. We must continue to emphasize growth, fertility, marbling and docility while keeping birth weights down—an easy thing to do with EPDs. Our improvement in disposition, according to our genetic trends, has been nothing short of astounding, but we should continue to keep pressure on that trait as was evidenced in some of the EPDs on the Hill. Above all, we must make our cattle acceptable in the mainstream commercial market, which means we must continue to see the positive genetic trend in marbling we have exhibited over the last four years continue and accelerate.

One of the highlights of the Annual Meeting was the unveiling of the strategic plan. We had an excellent discussion concerning the vision, mission, core values, strategies and actions. The roundtable format worked great, allowing everyone to have input. One of the biggest areas of confusion was defining "mainstream market." First, you can assume that most of our Limousin and Lim-Flex® bulls are being used on high-percentage Angus cows, which will have a high propensity to grade but not to yield.

Basically, the mainstream market is fed cattle that are 60 percent Choice, Yield Grade (YG) 2. Ideally, you would have no Standard carcasses and no YG 4s. A higher percentage of YG 1s are great in a terminal-sire situation, but if people are keeping back the heifer-mates, they won't necessarily like them. Our cattle need to bring to the table yield, muscling, feed efficiency and growth. Our cattle do not have to bring Choice marbling, but we must not drag down grade to the point we add Standard carcasses to the equation.

The Hereford breed is a great example. Those animals are not known for grading a high percentage of Choice, but they also do not have a problem with Standard carcasses. We need to fit into the same category.

In closing, I would like to thank the membership, Board and staff during this year of transition. The Limousin breed's best years are still ahead of us.