

Bringing Out the Best

This dedicated, hard-working Western couple strives to bring out the best in Herefords whether custom fitting or breeding their own.

“With the proper vision, promotion and marketing, we can once again place Herefords on the top rung of the ladder. We must work together to correct our weak points and then let the entire industry know how great the Hereford breed really is.”

—Tom Weimer

by Maggie Malson

Tom and Cindy Weimer grew up in the Hereford business. Therefore, it was an easy decision for them to stay involved in the beef cattle industry as adults. This husband-wife team operates Weimer Cattle Co., a custom fitting, ranch management and consulting firm, and also their own herd of registered Herefords, near Susanville, Calif.

“We enjoy working outside and with the cattle,” Tom says. “And we enjoy the show atmosphere mainly because of the people we have met. The people keep us in it.”

Getting started

Weimer Cattle Co. got its start after Tom decided it was time to step out and become his own boss. Prior to this, he was the herdsman for Falkland Farms, Shellsburg, Pa., the manager of Five Point Pastures, Greensburg, Pa., and the herdsman for Beartooth Ranch, Columbus, Mont.

In 1983, Tom leased Hawley Land & Cattle Co.’s show facilities in Cottage Grove, Ore. While there, he met and hired Cindy to help with his rapidly expanding show string. Cindy had been working for Happy Valley Ranch, Susanville, Calif.

Tom and Cindy married in 1985 and immediately started looking for a better location; one at a higher elevation and with a better climate to feed show cattle and expand their cow herd.

“In Oregon, Cottage Grove was down in a valley, and it was wet and muddy most of the year,” Tom explains. “Susanville, located about 70 miles north of Reno, Nev., at 4,200 feet, was just what we were looking for.”

Cindy is originally from the Susanville area and it allowed them to remain relatively close to a majority of their rapidly expanding client base. At one time, Weimers had 62 consultant clients. During the past several years, they have gradually reduced this number to a group that is more equitable to manage.

“We wanted to devote more time and energy to our clients,” Tom explains. “For various reasons, we have been able to reduce our number of clients to a more fair and manageable number. Some we have had since the start of our business. Many of them have become more than clients; they have become very good friends.”

One of those clients and good friends is Mike Allison, Allison Hay & Herefords, Boardman, Ore. Allison has known the Weimers since 1988, when he took his first bull to them.

“Tom and Cindy have a world of knowledge to share,” Mike says. “I just listen and sort through it in order to make

decisions for my operation. They are such hard working people. Everything they do is presented in a professional manner."

Providing clients with a high quality and professional service is a priority for the Weimers no matter their role.

"There are various levels of service we provide for other ranches," Tom explains. "This includes showing cattle, purchasing breeding animals, complete herd management, advertising, marketing, nutrition and record keeping."

The Weimer's devotion to their clients has paid off—during the past four decades they've exhibited 23 national champions, starting in 1973 with Victorious K47 U81 and following the next year with Vindicator. On the heels of these championships were ones with FPP Advancer's Joy and EF Advancer 648J.

In the 1980s, their winners were BT Driver 536L, BT Lumina 447M, OHF Trifecta 410X and BT Victress 15X. The '90s brought 3R Johnny Reb, VF Armors Victor 326C and MH Payday 92D to name a few. The title they are most proud of winning is the 2002 national reserve grand champion polled bull, TCW Pathfinder 23C 18K. The Weimers raised this bull, his dam and granddam.

"It was a feeling unlike any other," Tom says. "We had a new set of emotions we had never dealt with before." The Weimers followed last year's win with the 2003 national reserve grand champion polled bull, D&M 53H Kreedence 003K, at this year's National Western Stock Show.

The Weimers concentrate their show efforts along the West Coast in Washington, Oregon and California, as well as at the National Western in Denver and the Western Nugget in Reno. In years past, they exhibited at shows throughout the country.

"When the National was permanently moved to Denver several years ago, it no longer became economically sensible for our clients to exhibit so far from their base marketing areas," Cindy explains.

The Weimers have also exhibited and had champions at the Canadian Western Agribition in Regina, Alta., and at Palermo in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Reno's Western Nugget Hereford Show is usually their biggest event because they live so close. They average around 30 head there each year.

The Weimers have 40 acres around their home that are devoted to their show and sale cattle business. In the center is the show barn, surrounded by pens, runs, traps and small pastures. They've had as many as 104 head of show and sale cattle on feed at one time.

"While a lot of people wake up and go to work, we wake up right in the middle of it," Cindy says. "It takes about a minute to walk to the barn. At home, Tom and I do all the work ourselves and the cow work is all done on horseback."

With such large show strings, the Weimers depend on a nucleus of people who have helped them at shows for many years. However, when they are at home they don't hire any outside help.

Their continued show ring success has brought many individual accolades. Tom and Cindy are the only husband and wife to individually win the prestigious national "Herdsman of the Year" award presented by the American Hereford Association and voted upon by their peers. Tom won in 1979 and Cindy in 1991.

Breeding for quality

In addition to their custom fitting and consulting services, Weimers maintain their own herd of polled Herefords. At present, they run about 50 mother cows.

"We AI extensively," Tom explains. "We're trying to breed to bulls of superior genetics. Just like many other breeders, we can't afford to own all the bulls we would like to use. AI allows us to incorporate many of the top bulls into our breeding program."

The goal of their breeding program is quite simple: To breed top quality range bulls and breed-improving replacement females.

"Being a successful breeder in today's world is not an easy task," Tom points out. "There are three key ingredients that every animal must have if it is going to make it in the seedstock marketplace: phenotype, pedigree and acceptable EPDs. If any one of these is lacking, the value of the animal is greatly reduced."

Most of the Weimer bull calves are sold before 12 months of age and go to work in purebred operations as herd bulls. In order to stay connected to the commercial market, Weimers annually send several bulls to a local bull test.

"If we end up with something good enough to show, so be it, but that is not the number one goal of our program," Tom says. "It's more of a bonus."

Because of Tom's 40-year experience in breeding, showing and marketing Hereford cattle to 49 states and 10 foreign countries, he is often invited to give speeches to groups throughout the West. He often shares this thought with his audience:

"If you sell pickup trucks, refrigerators or furniture, the consumer comes to the product. Oftentimes in the seedstock business, we must take our product to the consumer. The show ring should be looked at as an advertising and marketing tool. You might have the greatest breeding program in the country but if you don't show, very few of your potential customers will know.

"It is also a great opportunity to compare the production of your breeding program with other ranches throughout the country," he says. "In many ways the show ring is a necessary evil of the small seedstock producer."

Tom and Cindy enjoy working with Hereford cattle and cherish the many friendships they have made all over the world. Their future plans are to continue breeding and promoting Herefords for years to come. "At one time, the Hereford breed was the king of cow country," Tom admits. "With the proper vision, promotion and marketing, we can once again place Herefords on the top rung of the ladder. We must work together to correct our weak points and then work together to let the entire industry know how great the Hereford breed really is." HW

