

VALUE OF PEDIGREED LIVESTOCK

We sometimes hear agricultural people scoff at the efforts made by purebred livestock producers who track detailed pedigrees and production records. It is not uncommon for commercial producers to suggest that registration papers are a waste of valuable time and that grade animals produce just as well as purebreds. An increasing number suggest that crossbred animals are even more exceptional because of resulting “hybrid vigor”. That may be true, but could there be crossbreds or commercial animals were it not for the genetic pool of purebreds to work from? Number wise, the purebred livestock population is a minority group but it is a majority group in terms of genetic influence.

Purebreds are the foundation of all breeding systems. Breed associations provide a valuable service to their membership and to the entire livestock industry by recording ancestry, or pedigrees. Pedigrees are a valuable tool in livestock breeding because these ancestral records provide knowledge necessary for predicting the performance of progeny. Commercial producers purchasing seedstock will dramatically decrease their chance of error if they use pedigree and progeny of proof in making their selection decisions. Breeding programs can be directed toward specific goals by selecting seedstock that excel in those traits for which the herds need improvement.

Information contained as part of a registration certificate consists of individual animal identification, parentage (sire and dam) and performance. With that knowledge and previous information stored in the breed association data bank, a pedigree can be produced for the breeder. The breeder provides almost every piece of raw data used in the production of pedigrees and records, bringing to surface the importance of breeder integrity. Few, if any, industries are more dependent upon individual integrity than the pedigreed livestock industry. Verification of parentage by DNA genetic profiling is becoming increasingly common with pedigree verification. Powerful genomic evaluations are changing earlier methods of genetic selection.

Each domestic animal species has traits that are of economic value. For horses, it may be speed and athletic ability. Dairy producers are concerned with longevity and milk production. Beef, swine and sheep producers are inclined to focus on growth rates and feed efficiency. These and other production traits are heritable and can be improved through careful selection. A permanent record of ancestors and their comparative production traits is a valuable tool if breeders are to make wise breeding decisions that lead to improved production and efficiency.

Two specific organizations with Cache Valley roots continue to have a significant impact on the purebred dairy industry. Richmond Black and White Days, now in its 97th year, has become one of the premier purebred dairy shows in the entire world. The national Holstein Friesian Association has designated this event as the Western Spring National Dairy Show. Some of the finest dairy cattle in the entire world are exhibited, and sometimes sold each year in Richmond.

Plans are underway for an exceptional exhibit and celebration when the show celebrates 100 years in 2015. The entire dairy industry and ultimately all consumers are dependent on the quality of registered dairy animals that are developed by serious purebred breeders.

Cache Valley Breeders Association was founded in 1948 as a cooperative owned and managed by local dairy and beef producers. This local agricultural coop joined the Select Sires cooperative in 1969. Most recently, Cache Valley Select Sires has merged with KABA/Select Sires to form Select Sires MidAmerica, Inc. Current manager Randy Hill and the board of directors are confident that this merger will enhance services and continue to provide superior genetics to their customer-owners. This tiny local agricultural cooperative has become a leader in providing exceptional genetics to dairy and beef producers worldwide. I enjoy bragging about the success of this local agricultural organization.