

Beef Improvement Federation Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Brown and Nichols Co-Winners BIF Outstanding Seedstock

For the first time in the 25-year history of the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF), co-winners were named to receive BIF's Outstanding Seedstock Producer Award. Honored at the 25th Anniversary Convention held at the Grove Park Inn, Asheville, N.C., were R.A. "Rob" Brown of Throckmorton, Texas, and J. David Nichols of Bridgewater, Iowa.

Rob Brown is considered one of the most forward thinking, creative, yet pragmatic cattle breeders anywhere. Since he assumed the management reins in 1965, the R.A. Brown Ranch has expanded from 26,000 acres to more than 112,000 acres and five purebred cattle herds — Angus, Simmental, Simbrah, Red Angus and Senepol. The 1,350 purebred cows are managed exactly the same as the 1,508 commercial cows, except for pedigree information.

Rob has emphasized calving ease, balanced EPDs and bulls with moderate frame, capacity and fleshing ability. He uses trait leaders and owns 2J Polled Siegfried and RAB Polled Power, trait leaders in weaning and yearling weights that are leased to ABS. He has bred six other Simmental bulls that are leaders in 10 traits. He has more Simbrah bulls in the sire summary than any other breeder.

Under extensive range conditions, the 95 percent average annual pregnancy rate, 70 percent of which is through artificial insemination, is further testimony of Brown's never ending demand for production efficiency.

Brown gives freely of his time to industry service. He has served on the boards of ASA, NCA, TSCRA, AQHA, AISA and others. He served as president of ASA and AISA. He has been honored many times by various industry groups.

Brown is a gentleman, a rancher, an innovator, and a disciple of performance testing who personifies goals and objectives of Beef Improvement Federation.

Dave Nichols, managing partner of Nichols Farms Ltd., began in the cattle business with the purchase of 40 registered Angus in 1952 as a 4-H member. In 1968 Nichols Farms bought some of the first Simmental semen imported into the United States. Approximately nine years

ago, they added Salers to the seedstock program. Currently, the farm manages 797 cows.

Dave has always set goals and sought solutions to cattle producer's problems since those early days in 4-H. He has combined research information with an acute sense for merchandising his product to becoming the largest beef cattle seedstock producer in Iowa. Nichols Farms has gone from annually selling five bulls in the early years, to nearly 500 today.

Nichols Farms has been at the forefront of collecting genetic data on their seedstock. A recent project has provided them with a DNA library on every cow. They are currently involved in carcass characteristic research utilizing ultrasound and this DNA library. Seventy-five percent of all cows are bred AI to high accuracy EPD bulls. Recently, Nichols has moved the operation more extensively into embryo transfer, flushing 73 of their top Angus and Simmental cows.

In addition to managing Nichols Farms, Dave continues to work for the industry by serving as a director and officer of several breed associations, as an Iowa Cattlemen's Association district director and currently is Iowa's representative on the Beef Promotion and Research Board.

The Beef Improvement Federation believes it is most appropriate to honor two such outstanding and deserving seedstock producers on the occasion of its 25th anniversary.

Jon Ferguson Named BIF Outstanding Commercial Producer

Jon C. Ferguson, managing partner of Ferguson Brothers Inc., Kensington, Kan., has been selected as Beef Improvement Federation's 1993 Outstanding Commercial Producer at its 25th Anniversary Convention.

Jon returned to the family operation in 1973 after receiving a degree in nuclear engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Ferguson Brothers' operation is located in north-central Kansas. It consists of 2,100 acres under cultivation and 5,100 acres of rangeland. The beef operation consists of 730 head of predominantly Angus and Angus cross females and approximately 1,000 head of stocker cattle. Ownership of a majority of the stockers is retained with cattle finished in a custom feedlot.

Although some may think Ferguson chose the wrong college curriculum to be a cattleman, the thought couldn't be more wrong. Jon says the essence of an engineering degree is problem solving. Coupled with a knowledge of animal science, the problem solving process can advance a beef production system. Jon holds the belief that being a successful cattleman is accomplishing the most with the least in terms of both labor and capital investment. Although Ferguson strives for efficient costs within his commercial operation, he does not restrain from making progressive changes to improve quality. His business sense and dedication to excellence has made his operation successful.

Beef Improvement Federation Publishes History

As part of its 25th anniversary, the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) has published "Ideas Into Action," a history of the BIF organization. BIF consists of state, national and international organizations that are actively conducting performance programs in beef cattle for their members.

"Ideas Into Action" was authored by Richard Willham of Iowa State University; Roy Wallace of Select Sires Inc.; and the late Frank Baker of Winrock International. The history chronicles the development of this unique organization and its many accomplishments. "Ideas Into Action" is filled with anecdotes and personal accounts of BIF meetings and workshops. Historical documents, letters and pictures help tell the story of unifying various beef industry organizations into one group dedicated to the improvement of beef cattle.

"Ideas Into Action" will be a valuable addition to both personal and organizational libraries. Order your copy today for \$12.50 from Ron Bolze, BIF executive secretary, NW Research and Extension Center, Rt. 2, Box 830, Colby, KS 67701. Quantity discounts are available.



Since 1989, Ferguson has incorporated artificial insemination (AI) into his program, using it on approximately 480 heifers and cows. His replacement heifers are exclusively from the AI matings and from Angus sires with appropriate maternal and growth EPDs at a reasonable cost. In the last two years, Jon has cooperated with the American Angus Association in the collection of carcass data on steers from these AI matings.

Jon Ferguson is a businessman. He has the unique ability to discover ways to produce a quality product while keeping control of costs. BIF is pleased to recognize this excellent production system with its 1993 Outstanding Commercial Producer Award.

Richard Willham Receives BIF Pioneer Award

Richard Willham, professor of animal science at Iowa State University, was a recipient of the Beef Improvement Federation's Pioneer Award.

Willham has been active in BIF since its formative years. At that time, he was the primary advocate of estimated breeding values (EBVs). Drawing on principles set forth in scientific literature, he personally developed guidelines and computer programs for both breeders and breed associations, assisting them in generating EBVs.

As secretary of the genetic prediction committee with BIF, he has personally written or edited all *BIF Guidelines* editions outlining genetic procedures for national sire evaluation and genetic prediction.

Willham's career has been marked by excellence as an educator and significant research contributions. He has written textbooks and trained numerous graduate students who have distinguished themselves as leaders in the livestock industry.

Widely known and respected for his books and lectures on the history of livestock breeding and production, Willham's most recent contribution was written with Roy Wallace and the late Frank Baker, and chronicles 25-year development.

BIF is pleased to be able to recognize Richard Willham for his many contributions to genetic improvement in the beef cattle industry by presenting him with a 1993 Pioneer Award.

