



"CHB Bites" is a column designed to keep you in-the-know about Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) program happenings. CHB LLC is celebrating 20 years with a "Farm-to-Fork" series featuring how Herefords become the ultimate eating experience. You can also follow CHB on Facebook at facebook.com/CertifiedHerefordBeef.



Farm-to-Fork

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Stocker Operation

As Hereford cattle are making their way from the cow-calf producer to their next stop, the stocker operation, we continue our Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) Farm-to-Fork series. The stocker operator will put weight on the cattle before sending them to their next destination, which is the feedlot.

In a stocker operation, cattle are obtained that can range from 200-650 lb. with the ultimate goal of providing a consistent pen of cattle to be sold to the next stage of the production line — the feedlot operation.

"I'm looking for quality cattle," says Lawrence Turner of Turner Ranch in Valentine, Neb., who backgrounds Hereford calves. "It starts with good Hereford genetics. They tend to give me a depth of body and thickness and length in the quarters you don't see with other breeds."

The cattle are customarily purchased after weaning and are turned out onto pasture to gain weight before being shipped to the feedlot.

Considering the amount of capital and available land needed for a successful stocker operation,



Dave Bielema, Great Lakes Hereford Beef, Grand Rapids, Mich., says Herefords fit well into stocker operations because of their docility and efficiency.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVE BIELEMA

Turner Ranch finds the Hereford breed fits the bill.

"Genetically, Herefords have performed well for us," Turner says. "We don't feed a lot of hay and depend on what grass we have. They take that grass very efficiently and convert it to energy to grow better than any other breed I've come across."

Another input stockers consider is labor. It doesn't matter if it's a one-man operation or a few top hands; either way there still has to be labor paid. The labor area has been of particular concern and will continue to be as more and more consumers express interest in knowing where their food comes from in this day of instant information.

Turner says Hereford cattle are easy to work with. "One of the reasons we like to background Herefords is their good disposition," he says. "It's also easier than the cow-calf operation, to me anyway. You don't have to worry about calving and watching momma cows around the clock. The margin might be slimmer, but if you do it right the stocker phase is still a vital part of production."

Dave Bielema, Great Lakes Hereford Beef, Grand Rapids, Mich., says Herefords fit well into stocker operations because of their docility and efficiency. Great Lakes Hereford Beef has been buying stocker cattle since 2009. It focuses on purchasing healthy cattle that have an opportunity to put on weight and can be sold for a premium as CHB®. When Hereford cattle leave an operation like Great Lakes Hereford Beef, they are sorted and grouped according to weight, and then they are shipped to the next stage — the feedlot. **HW**



PHOTO COURTESY OF TURNER RANCH

Lawrence Turner of Turner Ranch, Valentine, Neb., says Hereford cattle perform well in their stocker operation.

Layco Hired as Certified Hereford Beef LLC Director of Retail Marketing



Mark Layco

Mark Layco is the new Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC director of retail marketing. Mark joins the CHB LLC team with more than 25

years of retail meat experience.

Most recently, Mark has been working in Houston, Texas, as a meat merchandising and meat/seafood operations specialist for Kroger. He was responsible for the profitability of the meat and seafood department in 109 Kroger supermarkets in the Houston and Dallas/Ft. Worth marketplace with annual sales of \$550 billion.

Mark started his meat business career in the backroom — cleaning equipment in a Kroger store while putting himself through college at Stephen F. Austin. Over time, he was promoted within Kroger transitioning to a trained meat cutter, then store market manager, to manager of several store meat markets. Eventually, he was promoted to merchandising specialist of Kroger's largest corporate division for meat sales.

"Mark is a young, talented and extremely knowledgeable retail merchandising specialist who will add an element to the Certified Hereford Beef team that we have not ever had before," says American Hereford Association (AHA) Executive Vice President Craig Huffhines. "He has been involved in the trenches of retail meat marketing bearing enormous responsibility for corporate profits. He knows what it takes for products to succeed at the consumer level. His work ethic and knowledge will be a great fit for our team and a major asset to the overall goal of the AHA and our flagship commercial marketing program — Certified Hereford Beef."

Mark and his wife, Christine, have two children — Hailey (17) and Logan (12). Mark started on Dec. 8 and will work out of the Houston area. **HW**