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# HEREFORD WORLD

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## Performance Herefords: Sound and Solid

*For its excellence, innovation and dedication, Sandhill Farms was named 2010 BIF Seedstock Producer of the Year.*

by Angie Stump Denton

Founded on the principles of sound genetics and solid management practices, Sandhill Farms is a family owned and operated Hereford seedstock business, located near Haviland, Kan., and currently managed by Kevin and Vera Schultz.

The framework of today's cattle program at Sandhills was laid by Kevin's father, Ron, and grandfather, Roy. Ron and his wife, Arnita, still play an active role in the farm today. Kevin and Vera's children, Brooke, Tyler and Courtney, are the sixth generation currently helping on the farm.

The Schultz family uses defined goals to ensure the success and longevity of Sandhill Farms. Those goals focus on producing Hereford seedstock possessing value for commercial and purebred breeders, improving performance and carcass merit, and providing a solid foundation for future generations to be involved in the business.

For its dedication and success as a leading performance-focused breeder, Sandhill Farms was named the 2010 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Seedstock Producer of the Year during the BIF Annual Meeting and Research Symposium June 30 in Columbia, Mo.



The fourth, fifth and sixth generations of the Schultz family play an active role in Sandhill Farms. Pictured (l to r) are: Tyler, Courtney, Brooke, Kevin and Vera Schultz.

Dan Moser, Kansas State University associate professor of beef cattle genetics, says, "Sandhill Farms represents the core principles of BIF: excellence in production of profit-oriented performance cattle through education and research, combined with

the values that make this beef cattle industry so great."

The operation began as a commercial cow-calf and farming business. Registered Hereford bulls were brought into the program in the

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Sandhill Farms is located in south central Kansas near Haviland. The goal of this diversified cattle and farming operation is to produce high-quality seedstock that assists the industry in providing the consumer with a safe, nutritious eating experience.





Seventy-five percent of all calves born at Sandhill Farms are produced using AI or ET.

mid-1940s. Kevin and Vera added the registered cow herd in the mid-1980s.

“The most significant change we, as the fifth generation, have made at Sandhill Farms is transitioning from a strictly commercial cow herd to a predominately registered cow-calf operation,” explains Kevin. “Armed with today’s technology and the previous generations’ wisdom about the biological type of cattle needed to succeed in our environment, our registered program has continued to improve year after year. We are breeding cattle that enhance the profit and convenience traits of our calves.”

The herd today consists of 300 brood cows, with about two thirds being registered and one third being purebred commercial.

Sandhill Farms is one of the most influential performance Hereford breeders today, Moser adds. “Compared with breed averages, their cattle have more calving ease, more growth, more milk, more marbling and more ribeye area.”

#### Sandhill program

“The breeding program we have created is based on several generations of cow-minded breeders,” Kevin explains. “When the registered program began, the commercial herd had been in production for more than 50 years. The decision was made to breed the registered cows to follow the biological type of the commercial cows. In doing so, the base was set. However, when EPDs (expected

progeny differences) were established, as an example, we had more birth weight and less intramuscular fat than was acceptable. We used our complete whole-herd records system and began locating outliers for traits we needed. We have been able to identify cow families that maintained the biological type we knew the commercial industry needed but could instill intramuscular fat and drop birth weight at the same time.”

The spring-only breeding program uses artificial insemination (AI), embryo transfer (ET) and cleanup bulls. AI is utilized on all commercial and registered yearling heifers and top-performing registered cows. The commercial and bottom-end registered cows are used as recipients in the ET program.

Seventy-five percent of all calves born on Sandhill Farms are produced using artificial insemination and embryo transfer. All calves are born in the spring and tagged at birth. By maintaining complete records, Sandhill Farms is able to run a calf crop analysis each year to keep track of expenses and income.

“In order to create the cow herd for the future, we are identifying the outliers from within the herd that will help us in our newer goals of carcass traits and curve-bending growth,” Kevin explains. “These outliers then are used as sires or donor cows to make the herd better. We have brought in a few bulls and cows as genetic tools to address areas that needed tweaked. Compared to the previous generations, faster improvement has been made using EPDs, ultrasound, actual carcass data and some DNA.”

Lorna Marshall, ABS Global Inc. beef sire acquisition manager, says Sandhill Farms genetics have made a substantive impact on the Hereford breed and the commercial cow-calf industry. “Kevin was one of the first Hereford breeders to lead the charge emphasizing calving ease, while developing ‘the right kind’ of growth and enhancing carcass quality and yield,” she says. “All the while, he never compromised the maternal strength of his program. Much of the renewed interest the Hereford breed is experiencing within the beef industry is due to breeders like Kevin willing to embrace and lead change in a positive direction.”

#### Data minded

“Certainly, tradition is a key element of our industry, which can at times make embracing change a difficult task,” explains Marshall. “Sandhill Farms truly adopts an attitude of innovation that is unusual to the typical seedstock producer. Always investigating new technologies and participating in programs, Kevin has tested cattle through every program that has become available to further enhance his knowledge and understanding of his own genetics. Whether collecting feed efficiency data through the Circle A Sire Alliance or utilizing the American Hereford Association (AHA) carcass test program, Sandhill Farms is continually on the cutting edge of genetic discovery.”

The Schultz family has participated in the AHA Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) program since its inception. Sandhill Farms has been recognized by AHA as a Gold TPR breeder for its commitment to collecting performance data continuously since the program’s inception.

“The Schultz family is progressive and yet determined to have a program that provides a product that is built through sound, objective thinking,” says Jack Ward, AHA chief operating officer and director of breed improvement. “They do the research, test the bulls, collect and incorporate all the data, and then utilize AI and ET to make quick and meaningful progress.”

Sandhill Farms has tested more bulls in the AHA National Reference Sire Program (NRSP) than any other breeder during the last 10 years. After being tested and proven, the top bulls are used in the breeding program. Outside bulls that are highly accurate and proven from multiple herds are also used.

All cow herd records have been kept in complete, accurate data systems since the beginning. With each change of software, the past records have been converted; as a result, the Schultz family has complete records on all registered and commercial cows from 1993.

“The records we create from our current database, GEM, are one of the most important tools we use on a daily basis,” Kevin says. “We can generate many useful calf, sire and dam

Sandhill Farms has tested more bulls in the AHA NRSP than any other breeder during the last 10 years. Kevin is eager to participate in research programs that help validate the value of Hereford genetics.

Starting in the fall of 2006, AHA cooperated with Circle A Ranch testing Hereford bulls on its commercial Angus females, and of the bulls tested, 40% were Sandhill bulls.



Environmental stewardship is very important to the Schultz family, as they hope to pass the land and resources to the next generation in better condition than when they received them. Conservation plans have been developed for all the acreage used by Sandhill Farms. A rotational grazing program has been implemented to better maintain pastures. In addition, minimum tillage and strip tillage is used to protect the land from wind erosion.





For the last 14 years, the Schultz family has participated in the National Western pen show and has had the champion or reserve pen the last five years.

production records, EPDs, ultrasound reports, etc. All data is entered from birth to processing. The adjusted weights, scan records, and all sire and dam records are then downloaded from AHA. This information is used for all culling and breeding decisions. All semen, embryo and animal inventories are kept, as well as customer records and sale reports.”

#### Marketing strategy

After selling bulls private treaty for years, Sandhill Farms hosted its first production sale in April 2008. Currently, the Schultz family sells 65 bulls per year, with 30% going to purebred breeders and 70% going to commercial breeders.

Kevin says selling private treaty was enjoyable, as he could spend more time with the customers. “Due to the fact we do not have as much one-on-one time sale day, we provide every piece of information gathered on the bulls in the sale catalog,” Kevin says. “In addition to the pedigree, 31 different pieces of information are listed in our catalog.”

The 2010 sale bulls’ average EPDs ranked in the top 1% of the breed in two of the four indexes and in the top 10% in the remaining indexes.

An indication of Kevin’s success as a marketer, as well as a testament to his breeding program, is the fact that his first sale ranked in the top five of the Hereford breed during 2009. The farm’s 2010 sale is positioned to rank just as high.

“Culling cows and turning generations is one of our passions in cattle breeding,” Kevin says. “The ability to make each generation better is our goal. Cows are always culled for the obvious things: fertility, performance, udders, physical problems, disposition and the list goes on. As we move forward with our genetic program, turning the generations with the daughters of proven sires is the fastest way we will move toward our goals.

“To this point, we have moved to keeping all our registered heifers that meet our selection standards. To make room for these females, we added another section to our annual spring bull sale. We sold all our 5-year-old cows that had a heifer calf at side. These are not problem cull cows, as those would have gone to the sale barn, but mid-age cows with value. The idea of selling those with heifer calves will allow us to keep and add value to the bull calves at a year of age.”

Semen sales are another marketing venue for Sandhill Farms. The farm currently has two bulls owned or leased by ABS Global. One of the bulls is the first Hereford to be in the top 13 in volume semen sales of all breeds.

“ABS has been honored to market several Sandhill Farms bulls including Progress and Ribeye,” says Marshall. “Both bulls have made significant impacts on our sales domestically and internationally, in both seedstock and commercial herds. Not only have they enjoyed incredible AI stud and

**“Culling cows and turning generations is one of our passions in cattle breeding. The ability to make each generation better is our goal.”**

— Kevin Schultz



commercial demand for their bulls, but Sandhill Farms has probably marketed as many herd sires to purebred breeders as any operation over the last several years.”

#### Focus on the customer

Customer service is a high priority at Sandhill Farms. The family works to retain current customers and to turn contacts into repeat buyers. With this in mind, Sandhill Farms offers several customer services, including free bull delivery, sight-unseen guarantee for buyers who cannot attend the sale and customer consignments of their baldie heifers to the Sandhill Farms annual production sale.

In addition, Kevin makes herd visits to become more familiar with customer needs.

It’s interesting to note that the 2010 BIF Commercial Producer of the Year, Downey Ranch of Wamego, Kan., purchased its first Hereford bulls this past April. And the farm Downey chose to buy bulls from was Sandhill Farms.

“Sustained excellence and innovation can always be traced back to dedication, commitment

#### Sandhill Farms Facts

- Average number of bulls sold/year: 65
- % of bull calf crop sold as breeding bulls: 70%
- % sold to purebred breeders: 30%
- % sold to commercial breeders: 70%
- Number of bulls in current sire summary:
  - Proven Sire Summary — 14
  - Young Sire Summary — 12
  - National Reference Sire Summary — 8
  - Carcass Sire Summary — 8



and integrity, and, in my opinion, Sandhill Farms exemplifies and embodies those traits,” Marshall says. “Sandhill Farms has been able to succeed based on genetic excellence, dedication to the industry and a keen ability to understand the entire production system from conception to consumption.” **HW**

BULL LOT		DOB: ####/##/##	#####	H/P/S/D: H
<b>Selling:</b> Full possession.				
<b>BMI\$</b> 00	SHF RADAR M326 R125 P42584018		KCF BENNETT 3008 M326	
<b>CEZ\$</b> 00	SHF GOVERNESS 236G L37 P42176503		SHF POSTIVE MISS 73C M15	
<b>BI\$</b> 00			MM RSM STOCKMASTER 512	
<b>CHB\$</b> 00			SHF INTERSTATE D03 G80	
<b>BW</b> 0.0	<b>WW</b> 00	<b>YW</b> 00	<b>MM</b> 00	<b>M&amp;G</b> 00
<b>SC</b> 0.0	<b>FAT</b> 0.00	<b>REA</b> 0.00	<b>MARB</b> 0.00	
<b>CE Score</b> 0.0	<b>Act. BW</b> 00	<b>BW Ratio</b> 00	<b>Adj. WW</b> 0	<b>WW Ratio</b> 00
<b>Adj. YW</b> 00	<b>YW Ratio</b> 0.00	<b>Adj. YH (IN)</b> 0.00		
<b>Adj. BF Ratio</b>	<b>Adj. REA Ratio</b>	<b>REA/cwt</b>	<b>Adj. MARB Ratio</b>	<b>MARB Ratio</b>
<b>Adj. SC (CM)</b>	<b>Age of Dam</b>	<b>Dam's Production BWR</b>	<b>WWR</b>	<b>YWR</b>
00-000	00.00-000	0.00-000	00	00
00	0-000	0-000	0-000	0-000

In its sale catalog, Sandhill Farms provides customers with every piece of information gathered on the bulls. In addition to the pedigree, 31 different pieces of information are listed.



From the cow herd that has worked for generations, the Schultz family is maintaining muscle, volume, udder quality and performance. Next to selling bulls, their favorite thing to do is cull the cow herd. This enables them to improve the overall quality of their cattle. They believe when buying cattle from a seedstock producer, you are buying the benefits and discipline of their culling program.