

2014 AHA President Steve Lambert balances his Hereford seedstock operation, leading the AHA and his role as county supervisor while always prioritizing what means the most to him — family.

by **Angie Stump Denton**

Juggling. It's not an easy task. There's no doubt Steve Lambert, 2014 American Hereford Association (AHA) president, has perfected the skill. He has mastered the ability to juggle his many daily tasks as a Hereford breeder, AHA Board member, county supervisor and, most importantly, a dad.

"Steve has brought a level of energy to our Board that has really motivated us, which in turn has created a tremendous Board and staff working relationship," says Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president.

"Professionally, Steve has many irons in the fire, from navigating local California political climate as a county supervisor to maintaining a reputable Hereford seedstock operation, and finally building a sizable northern California orchard enterprise. His entrepreneurial spirit is contagious, and we have all fed off of his larger-than-life personality."

Let's get to know the many hats of Steve Lambert...

Hereford breeder

Hereford cattle have been an important part of Steve's life since he was a junior member. As he was growing up, his family owned Creekside Ranch, a prominent

polled Hereford operation. See "Hereford heritage," Page 26.

Today Steve and his family manage their Hereford seedstock operation under the Lambert Ranch name. The Lambert breeding program focuses on selecting for low birth weights, high weaning and yearling weights, good udders, and structural soundness. Expected progeny differences (EPDs) are an integral part of Steve's sire selection process. Cattle with the L/R brand are expected to have the right physical characteristics and balanced numbers to carry out their jobs in the commercial industry.

Lambert genetics are marketed through multiple venues each year. In 2007 Steve partnered with the Mickelson family of Sonoma Mountain Herefords to host an annual bull sale each October.

The Lamberts also consign bulls to the Red Bluff Bull Sale each year. In 2014 they consigned the reserve champion polled bull at Red Bluff.

Steve also has a strong local market, selling a few females and bulls off the ranch private treaty each year.

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A Man of Many Hats

Hereford Breeder... Mr. President... Mr. Supervisor... Dad



Lambert Ranch bulls are developed on the ranch before selling in their annual bull sale each October.

He says their marketing philosophy is about developing and maintaining relationships.

“Customer service is so important,” Steve explains. “I like repeat customers. I want to build relationships. If our cattle help my customers be successful they’ll come back and buy again.”

Along with building relationships, he says it is important for seedstock producers, and the Hereford

industry as a whole, to listen to commercial producers and to understand what they want and need to be successful. This commitment to meeting customer needs will help continue the increasing demand for Hereford genetics.

Marketing minded, Steve says it is important to keep his ranch name and phone number in front of potential customers, so when they think Herefords, they think Lambert Ranch.

Showing is also a marketing tool and economic driver that has been utilized by the Lambert family for many years.

“I enjoy it,” Steve explains. “I’ve been showing since I was little. Showing is a great way to make contacts and market our program. It’s also a way to compare our stock to others.”

Each year the Lambert family exhibits at the California State Fair and the Sonoma County Fair. In 2014 they were named premier breeder and premier exhibitor at the California State Fair.

Although Steve’s Hereford breeder hat sometimes has to hang on the rack while he juggles other responsibilities, he says it’s the oldest and favorite hat he wears.

“If you like what you do, it’s not work,” he explains.

Industry leader

Through the years, Steve has committed himself to serving the breed and the beef industry that he learned so much from during his youth.

His first leadership role in the Hereford breed was serving on the California Junior Polled Hereford Association board of directors from seventh grade through high school. “The people I served with on the junior board are still my friends today,” he says.

Steve served as a director of the California/Nevada Polled Hereford Association from 2002-2010, serving a term as vice chairman. He was then elected to the AHA Board in 2010.



The Lamberts utilize showing as a marketing tool. Pictured here is Steve and Janet with “Driver” who won the California State Fair in 2013 and was reserve champion polled Hereford bull at the 2014 Red Bluff Sale.

Hereford heritage

Steve Lambert is a second-generation Hereford breeder. His parents — Stu and Marie — owned and operated Creekside Ranch, which in the 1980s and early '90s was one of the largest polled Hereford cattle operations in the U.S.

Steve and his brother, Matt, both showed cattle and participated in junior Hereford activities on the state and national levels. After their tenure in the showing ended, Creekside Ranch continued to exhibit cattle throughout the U.S., and both Stu and Marie were active in the American

Polled Hereford Association and the National Organization of Poll-ettes.

After graduating from Chico State, Steve worked with his dad on the ranch. In 1990, while still working with his dad, Steve started Lambert Feed and Garden while also continuing to build his own herd. In 1993 Steve left the family ranch to focus fulltime on his businesses. He also continued to keep a few cows under the Lambert Ranch name, experimenting with Limousin cattle in the '90s and then switching to Angus in the

During his tenure on the Board, he has served on the marketing, show and sale, finance, customer service, executive, and Hereford Publications Inc. committees. See “Q&A with AHA President Steve Lambert,” Page 29.

“Serving on the AHA Board has been an unbelievable honor,” Steve says. “I’ve served on a lot of different boards, but what makes this Board different is that I’m serving with others who are selfless — they are not trying to better themselves — their main concern is the betterment of the breed.”

Eric Walker, AHA vice president and Hereford breeder from Morrison, Tenn., says, “It has been a pleasure to serve with Steve on the AHA Board for three years. I will miss his energy and honesty. Steve’s roots run deep in the Hereford industry and we as breeders owe him a great deal of gratitude for a job well done as AHA president.”

Steve hung up his AHA Board hat Nov. 1 during the AHA Annual Meeting in Kansas City.

Public servant

Along with his Hereford leadership, Steve has devoted his time and experience to serving his community.

“I like being involved in my community,” Steve explains. “Too many people are self-serving. They want it

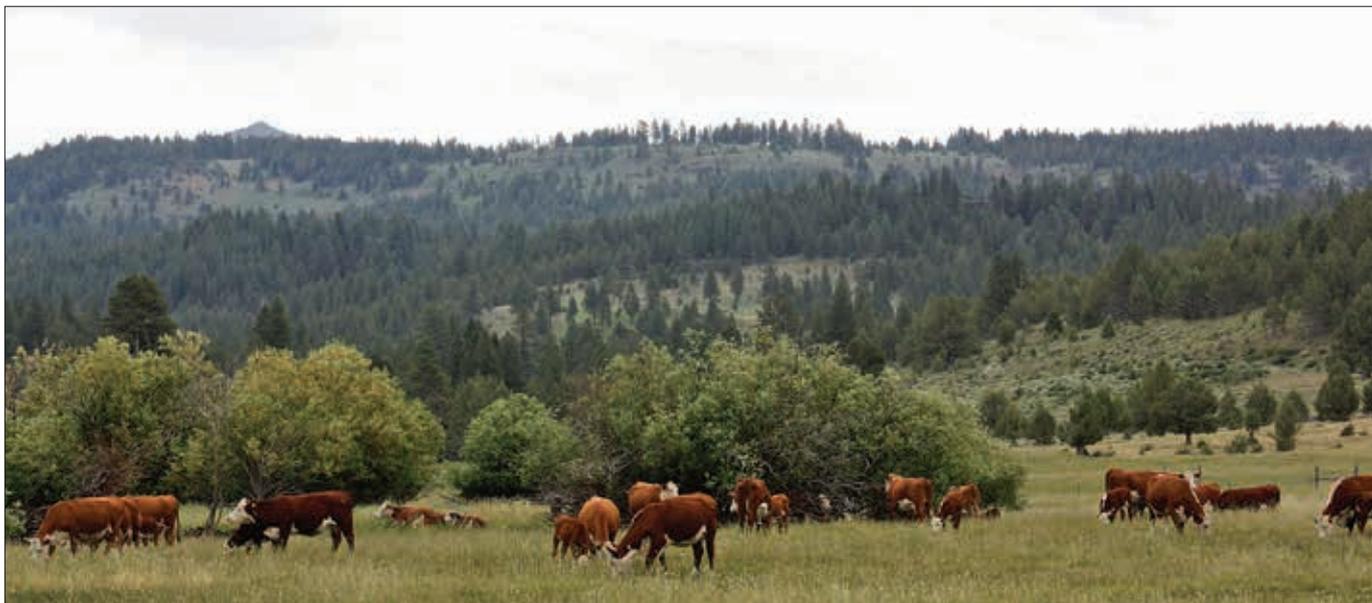
now, easy and free. And it doesn’t work like that.”

Steve has been active in local government and other community organizations. He serves on the California Farm Bureau beef commodity advisory board and was a Butte County Farm Bureau director for six years. He also sits on his local high school’s ag advisory committee and has played an integral role in keeping the local county fair operational.

On a broader scope, he served as mayor of Paradise, Calif., for three years and was elected in 2008 to serve as a Butte County Supervisor. He is currently serving his second four-year term.

Steve explains the supervisor role is a multi-faceted job. On a weekly basis, he deals with water issues, land use and state unfunded mandates. He’s constantly fighting to protect rural rights.

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The Lambert Ranch cow herd spends the summers grazing these mountain meadows near Alturas.

2000s. The feed and seed business grew to include five stores in Oroville, Paradise, Yuba City, Chico and Marysville, Calif.

Steve’s parents dispersed the Creekside herd in 1998. With their hearts still in the business, they grew the herd back to 250 head by 2001, when Steve’s dad passed away. At that time Steve picked 30 of the core cows, and that group of cows is how he got back into the Hereford business.

Because of the 2012 drought, the increasing demand for Hereford genetics, Hereford’s docility compared to Angus

and the land diverted to plant the 260-acre walnut orchard, Hereford is now the only breed with the L/R brand. Today Lambert Ranch is a diversified enterprise, growing hay and walnuts plus more than 200 Hereford cattle. A Gold TPR (Total Performance Records) breeder, Lambert Ranch has bred several Dams of Distinction.

The Lambert herd winters near Oroville and then is trucked to summer pasture near Alturas and Chester, Calif. **HW**

“It’s been an amazing experience,” he explains. “I’ve had a chance to learn firsthand how our country does and doesn’t work.”

For at least one more year, Steve will continue to balance his county supervisor responsibilities with his day-to-day activities on the ranch. Along with changing hats, a normal day can also include multiple wardrobe changes from a suit and tie to clothes fit for working cattle. He’s also become a master of multitasking — for example, participating in conference calls while checking cows.

At this time he’s not sure if he’ll seek re-election. “It’s not my goal in life to be a politician,” Steve explains.

When asked what he would like to devote his energy and time to, Steve answers quickly and with no hesitation, “I want to run cows, farm and hang out with my kids.”

Family man

Steve says the most important hat he wears is “dad” and the greatest gifts in his life are his kids and his family.

“I’m blessed to have such a great relationship with my kids,” he



Steve says he is excited to have his son Clayton join the Lambert Ranch team fulltime this fall.

explains. “Raising cattle is not just my thing, it’s a family thing. As a family we can work cows together all weekend and have fun while doing it.”

Steve and the love of his life, Janet Jones, have four children — Nathan, 24, recently graduated from Chico State with a degree in ag business; Clayton, 22, a senior at Chico State, who plans to return to the ranch after graduation; Meghan, 19, a sophomore at Santa Rosa Junior College; and Rossy, 20, a junior at Butte Community College.

He credits how close-knit his family is to their agriculture roots and being raised on a ranch. Just like his parents, Steve raised his kids involved in 4-H and FFA and showing Hereford cattle.

“The ranch gives me an excuse to ‘play’ with my kids,” Steve explains with pride in his voice.

Looking forward

With Clayton joining the family operation, Steve says the plan is to grow and expand Lambert Ranch.

This includes increasing cow numbers

as more land becomes available and the California drought ends. With the increasing demand for Hereford bulls in the West along with the growth in the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) program, Steve says he is excited about the opportunity to expand his Hereford cow herd.

With ranch expansion in mind, Steve also planted 19,000 walnut trees this past spring. Although, this endeavor reduced the acreage available to run cows, walnuts are a 40-year crop that will add to the diversification and success of the ranch.

As the walnut trees are being established, Steve, with his marketing and business approach, planted watermelons as a cover crop and revenue generator this past summer.

“It’s fun to have the kids come back and work with Janet and I on the ranch,” Steve says. “I’m excited about helping them be successful at what we love to do as a family.”

With Steve’s keen marketing and business sense, his commitment to Herefords and family, and his willingness to serve, he has found a way to juggle and balance his many roles with style and success. **HW**



The Lambert family (pictured, l to r) are: Rossy, Clayton, Janet, Steve, Meghan and Nathan.



Q What are your thoughts about having served as the 2014 American Hereford Association (AHA) president?

A It is an exciting time to serve as AHA president. We have a great Board of Directors, who represents a solid cross section of the industry and the country. The breed is heading back toward larger market share and desirability. Having grown up in a Hereford family, it is important to me to see the Hereford breed return to and maintain its rightful place in the beef industry.

Q What are some highlights of the past year?

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- 1) New staff hires and the current energy related to the Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC program are exciting.
 - 2) The cowboy appreciation barbecue we hosted for the Simplot Livestock Co. staff was a positive relationship builder for the hands-on crews that have been collecting the data for us. I personally enjoyed hearing their perspectives on Hereford genetics, be it good or bad.
 - 3) The Hereford Genetic Summit was one of my most memorable events of the year. It was a combination of education and breeder bonding. Our speakers represented a broad spectrum of the beef industry and gave us all something to take back to our operations.
 - 4) As president, I had the opportunity to travel to various parts of the country and enjoy the hospitality of the most gracious people that I have ever met and am now honored to call friends.
 - 5) Being able to host the Board of Directors in my home state and show them that we are more than just fruits and nuts out on the West Coast.

Q What are your thoughts on the current status of the Hereford breed?

A It is important that we don't compromise our quality for quantity trying to meet the market demand. We, as breeders, need to continually evolve and grow within our communities and realize consumers' demands as end users. As Hereford breeders, let's focus on what Herefords do best instead of trying to be all things to all people.

Q What do we need to work on as a breed?

A As a breed I think we are on the right track; we just can't lose focus.

- 1) We can't sacrifice ribeyes for more marbling. We don't want to single-trait select, but we do need to address carcass quality as a breed. As we move forward, it is important not to lose our focus on what has kept us in business all these years — like our structurally sound maternal cattle.
- 2) We must continue to breed cattle with fertility and longevity. Commercial producers have to buy a new Angus bull every year versus a Hereford bull that will last five to six years.
- 3) We've got to retain and foster new people in the breed.

Q How would you summarize your tenure on the Board?

A Having grown up in a Hereford family, serving on the Board is an unbelievable honor. I have been very fortunate to have spent my time with amazing men and women who all have a common goal to better and maintain the growth and integrity of our breed.

I encourage others to get involved. Being on the Board forges relationships, broadens your respect and knowledge of what fellow breeders face in their regions, and gives you an opportunity to help this organization attain its goals during this exciting time.

I would still like to see some changes in our structure that would allow for more breeder involvement through subcommittees that can help support and advise the Board. I believe that we all have something to bring to the table besides great steaks. **HW**

Q&A with AHA President Steve Lambert