

A Structurally Correct Foundation

Oklahoma cowman Jeff White is a firm believer in a breeding program built on a sound base.



The White family, from the left: Jace, Jeff, Dawn Ann and JD.



GKS Re-Hab, the newest addition to the White Farms bull battery.

He points to his highly prized bull “ACC1 Hustler 2N” to illustrate the point. “He is about as close to perfect in his structure as you could want. He’s the bull that we’re known for—he has really put our operation on the map. We’ve collected him, are using him heavily in our own herd and have leased him to Sunset View Farms (Auburn, Kentucky), who used him in their fall calving program. We’re selling semen in Canada through Semex and also working to ship his semen to Australia at this time,” he reported. His semen is also available through White Farms, Cattle Visions and Semex USA in the United States.

White recently purchased another powerful addition to his bull battery. “We bought ‘GKS Re-Hab,’ a ‘Dream On’ son, an unbelievably nice calf that is really thick and like our other bulls, structurally sound,” he says with obvious conviction.

His persistent selection quest also extends to eyeballing the female side of the breeding equation. “I want my heifers to have good udders and temperament. A lot of the time I’m working these cattle by myself and there is just no way I’m going to tolerate a wild one,” he commented.

Color is yet another trait that requires critical selection. “In this part of the country, the black ones sell first. ‘I’ve held back a few dandy red bulls that I thought might fit right into someone’s program, but you have to go with what the market demands and that’s black,” he said.

Jace White tags a new calf as his father looks on.



Deep Roots

White Farms traces back to the famed Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889, or the “Run” as White refers to it. His maternal great-grandfather, Pardner Moore, homesteaded 160 acres and cemented his ownership by meeting the US Government requirement of living on it for the first year, by occupying a dugout—a crude hole gouged out of the side of a hill. “It was pretty tough going for him. My grandma related the story about how he boiled an eagle for four days and never could eat it,” he laughed.

The homesteaded land has been handed down through four generations and along with other property, added by subsequent generations, now forms White Farms.

“My grandparents, Hap (John, Sr.) and Rosalie White always had Herefords. They loved those white-faced cattle,” he said.

“My dad, John Jr., had been a school teacher at Burlington, a little town just north of Cherokee. When I was twelve years old and ready to start seventh grade, he decided he’d like to return to the farm, and we moved

back to Cherokee. Some of his first cattle were Jersey-Angus crosses that he bought from a dairy. His thinking was that those little cows would give a lot of milk on less feed and raise a huge calf. Well, they did raise large calves; but they ate just as much as any bigger cow to produce that extra milk,” he continued. His dad, now in his 70s, still helps out around the ranch on a daily basis.

“In the early 70s, Charolais were a real hot item. We tried them and got some nice big calves, too,” he says. “In 1975, we were looking for another bull and my ag teacher, the late Ray Sharp, bought a three-quarter son of Galant for us. We used him on our cows and got some really good replacement heifers.”

Still not convinced, the Whites tried some other breed combinations, but when Jeff assumed a major role in the operation, he recalled those outstanding Simmental heifers. “The memory of those calves brought me back to Simmental,” he says. “I bought six registered Simmental heifers in 1982, and also acquired a black, bald-faced Simmental bull. A few years later, in 1987, I joined the American Simmental Association and we’ve been raising registered cattle ever since.”

At one time, the Whites farmed more than 1,500 acres, but in recent years, elected to reseed much of the more fragile farmland to pasture. Currently, farming is limited to 280 acres of wheat and another 90 acres of Alfalfa, which along with several grass hay meadows, produces the hay for their own herd.

(Continued on page 18)



Replacement heifers on wheat pasture.

By Dan Rieder

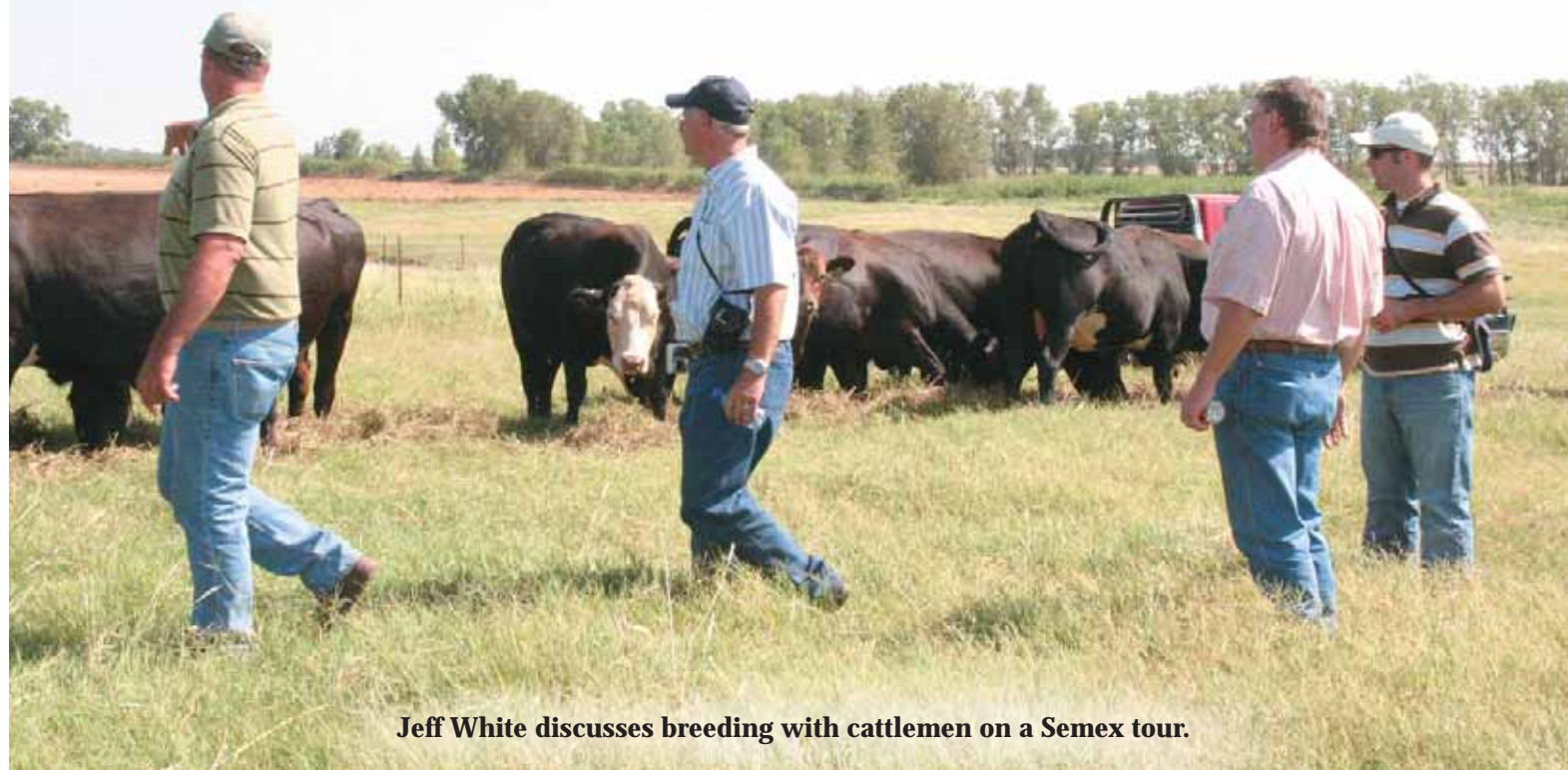
Jeff White, a Cherokee, Oklahoma, (population: 1,500) Simmental breeder for almost three decades, has developed and improved his 300-head cowherd by emphasizing rigid selection. He takes advantage of every available tool, from paying attention to Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) to Total Herd Enrollment (THE) to extensive use of artificial insemination (AI) and Embryo Transfer. But, he is also adamant about the significance of visual analysis.

“The most important thing to me, on any of these cattle is that they be thick, deep and structurally correct,” he says. “I rely on the technology; but as far as I am concerned, it all starts with cattle that can move and hold up under harsh environmental conditions, and the best way to make those choices is by looking them over very carefully.”

White begins every discussion about selection criteria with “they must be good on their feet and legs. If they’re not sound with a square hip, they’re not going to have much staying power,” he elaborated.

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(Continued from page 15)



Jeff White discusses breeding with cattlemen on a Semex tour.

Selling Private Treaty

White has had considerable success marketing his genetics by private treaty. "Last year, we sold 60 bulls. Our private treaty bull sale is held every March. I set a price on the bulls based on soundness, their performance on test, and ultrasound data. They are offered to the public on a 'first-come, first-served basis'," he explained. "This is not a one day sale, it's just the first day you can buy a White Farms Bull. At the same time, we may put some two-year-old bulls and females on display, and occasionally, we'll offer some ready-to-breed open heifers."

In addition, White sells a few cow/calf pairs and show heifers through various consignment sales. All steer calves are taken to the Cherokee Sales Company, the local livestock auction where he works one afternoon a week. A close personal friend, Tim Starks, DVM, owns the facility. White has also experienced success selling animals through participation in the Bull Pen Show at Denver.

White relies heavily on another acquaintance, Buddy Robertson, Shattuck, Oklahoma, for his marketing expertise. "Buddy is my herd consultant and a long-time friend. He has great connections and advises us on the best way to promote White Farms genetics. I trust him completely and he's been very good for our program," he says.

Jeff has become very proficient as an AI technician since attending an AI school at Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) in the late 70s. He personally breeds his replacement heifers and donor cows, achieving a success rate in excess of 80%. He's in demand as a paid technician, often traveling around Oklahoma to inseminate heifers. He recalls one job of breeding 600 virgin heifers in one herd.

White attended NWOSU at Alva, after graduating from Cherokee High School in 1976. He began courting his future wife, Dawn Ann, also a Cherokee native, after returning from college. She's self-

employed with Primerica Financial Services, which maintains an office in nearby Enid.

Married in 1979, Jeff and Dawn Ann are the parents of two sons. The oldest, J.D., 26, is in his final semester of law school at Oklahoma City University, and will be married in August to Lisa Helwer of Lone Wolf. Jace, 17, is a junior at Cherokee High, where he is a 4.0 student and a member of several school athletic and academic teams. Last year, the White family was named "Family of the Year" by the Oklahoma Simmental-Simbrah Association (OKSSA). Jeff has been a member of the OKSSA Board since 2000, and has served as vice president and president. Jace is the current vice president of the Oklahoma juniors.

"Most of my bull buyers are from Oklahoma and they prefer purebred Simmental bulls," White concluded. "Once you've convinced that commercial cowman to purchase a Simmental bull, you've got him hooked . . . and he'll be back for more!" ♦