

FROM FIELD TO DESK . . .

by KURT GILMORE



It was only a matter of time. People in large urban centres have made a major leap in recognizing quality beef for what it is - nutritious, very tasty and healthy.

In quoting Canadian Press in the "Travel" section of the Calgary Sun on August 22, *"A food revolution seems to be gaining followers in Canada's cradle of sushi and granola. Carnivores are grazing without shame in more and more Vancouver restaurants, unabashedly devouring huge hunks of red meat."*

The explanation is simpler than you might think. People are simply tired of dining out on small helpings of fish and chicken accompanied by large portions of mixed veggies that is rudely overpriced and unsatisfying. Again, to quote Canadian Press, *"The feeding frenzy may also have been fueled by a recent New York Times magazine article headlined WHAT IF IT'S ALL BEEN A BIG FAT LIE, which suggests steak and cheeseburgers are healthier than pasta and rice. New steak houses are opening - and doing well - throughout the greater Vancouver area."*

The foregoing is a highly documented and totally foreseeable trend based on the popularity of beef, not only as a result of increased quality, but of the recognition and promotion of such quality by all purveyors of meat throughout Canada. Urban consumers have absolutely no conception of carcass EPD's, marbling scores, ribeye areas or dressing percentages. But they know what they like to eat and they are willing to pay for it. It is our job to ensure not only that they continue to get a steady flow of high quality beef that will satisfy their palate, but we must also take every opportunity to promote our product and its quality to the end-user.

The fall sale season in Canada this year runs from mid September to mid December and many of those sales are advertised in the pages of this Hereford Link, which is being sent this month to some 10,000 cattlemen throughout the nation. Over the past few years, many of our breeders hosting these sales have taken on the responsibility of conducting ultra sound examinations of their yearling cattle in an effort to help determine predictable carcass traits. Most have made this information readily available, either in their sale catalogue or on supplementary sheets passed out to potential customers on sale day. We are well aware that ultra sound techniques are not 100 per cent accurate in predicting the carcass traits for individuals, but certainly it is generally accepted as a useful tool in analyzing an average measurement for a particular trait across a herd of cattle.

We know that a high percentage of Hereford cattle will compete favourably with any breed in terms of carcass quality and every conceivable effort is being made by breeders, as well as associations, to identify those individuals which are superior. Naturally, we must never fall into the trap of selecting for a narrow band of traits at the expense of the many profitable efficiencies that our breed already offers. However, there is a definite increasing demand for greater knowledge of carcass characteristics overall and all those involved in the Hereford breed are working to meet that demand.

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FIELD REPRESENTATIVES

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Keith Miller

#101 - 8975 Mary Street
Chilliwack, B.C.
V2P 4J4

Phone: (604) 795-4363

Fax: (604) 795-4622

Email: kmiller@cwk.imag.net

ALBERTA

Kurt Gilmore

5160 Skyline Way N.E.
Calgary, Alta.
T2E 6V1

Phone: (403) 274-1734

Fax (403) 275-4999

Email: herfrd@telus.net

SASKATCHEWAN/MANITOBA /ONTARIO

Dennis Nevin

1715 - 9th Street
Brandon, Manitoba
R7A 6K3

Phone: (204) 726-4903

Fax: (204) 726-0494

Email: dennis@justiceforallcattle.com

Web site: www.justiceforallcattle.com

SOUTH WEST SASKATCHEWAN

Wade Bertram

Box 204
Piapot, Sask.
S0N 1Y0

(306) 558-4515