



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Doug and Marilyn Lenth of Lenth Herefords Named 2018 Iowa Seedstock Producer of the Year

Doug and Marilyn Lenth have been named Iowa's Seedstock Producer of the Year for 2018. Lenth Herefords is a Purebred Registered Hereford cow herd out of Postville, Iowa. The coveted award, sponsored annually by the Iowa Beef Breeds Council, is being awarded to Doug and Marilyn Lenth on Monday, February 12th, 2018 at the Expo Kick-Off Program; which is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Bull Pen of the cattle barn at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. All friends of the Lenth family and the Iowa Beef Expo are invited to attend.

The Seedstock Producer of the Year is a coveted award among Iowa's Purebred breeders. The purpose of the award is to honor outstanding cattle producers in the seedstock industry. Each Purebred Breed Association is given the opportunity to nominate one candidate for the award. Applications are reviewed by a Seedstock Committee, which gives careful consideration to producer's programs in their entirety, including record keeping, industry participation and leadership, merchandising programs, selection criteria and herd improvement over time.

Doug and Marilyn have been in the Seedstock cattle business for 47 years raising Registered Hereford cattle and currently running a herd of 110 cows. Lenth Herefords has kept performance records for 47 years and has been a member of the Iowa Hereford Breeder's Association and the American Hereford Association. This Hereford cattle operation sells an average of 35 bulls and 35 breeding females each year by Private Treaty where they provide buyers and customers with birthweight, weaning weight, EPD's, scrotal circumference and frame score just to name a few.

Lenth Herefords is a generational cattle herd and the family has left a lasting impact on the cattle industry. Doug's Parents, Elden and Bea Lenth, founded this herd and are in the Iowa Hereford Breeders (IHBA) Hall of Fame. Doug and Marilyn's passion for this industry is quite evident as Doug is a former Board of Director for IHBA and Marilyn is a current board member and newly elected President of the IHBA. They are active in the Winneshiek County Cattlemen and are continually involved with Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) as they host the NICC Calmar Campus Beef Class at their farm each year. They have had many past champions at every level, including Champion Hereford Bull at the Iowa State Fair. Doug and his sister, Barb, exhibited champion bulls, steers, heifers and 'Pens' of bulls when they were growing up in the 1970's and 1980's.

In their own words, here is a brief historical review of their seedstock operation:

Lenth Herefords was started by Elden & Bea Lenth, and their son Doug. Their first registered Herefords were purchased from South Dakota in the mid 1960's, and a membership was officially started with the American Hereford Association (AHA) for the herd in 1970. The original goal was to build a high quality seedstock herd, to provide highly productive breeding bulls and females to purebred and commercial cattlemen. While some things have changed over the years, our core goals remain the same. Raising and selling Hereford cattle has been a 'way of life' for the entire Lenth family. Today, Doug and I (wife Marilyn) run the operation.

The original purchase that started Lenth Herefords was 25 cows and 31 heifers from Lemmon, South Dakota, and our first herd bull was brought in from North Dakota. He was still breeding 30 cows naturally when he was 13 years old. From the very beginning, we have felt structural soundness and longevity are vital to success for our own herd and our customers'. In our early years, we were line breeding our horned herd with the best producing sons raised from the most consistent herd bulls that we had purchased. Having a fat cattle packing plant three miles from home took most of the 'guess work' out of deciding which sire and sons to use. A 33% prime load shipped to Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) in 1997, followed by a 27% prime load in 1998, are just a couple of examples of what our cattle have done in the cooler.

We have traditionally been a herd built from our own replacement females. Only five females from Oxley dispersions were brought into our herd in the first 40+ years. In the past 5 years, a few select females have been added from select reputable hers, to expand our polled bloodlines. Horned Hereford bloodlines remained the base for the herd until 2003, when the first polled bull was introduced to the herd. Since then, selected polled bulls have been added to build a base of polled cattle, as customer demand for polled genetics grew. Today, the cow herd is approximately 1/2

horned, ½ polled cows, and with continued demand for polled bulls and females, only polled herd sires are being used, most being homozygous polled.

Throughout the years, record keeping has been an important part of the operation. That was taken to another level in 1995, though, when I entered into the operation. Having precious work experience in database development, sales, marketing, and customer service, I developed and wrote a customized Lenth Herefords database that has been the core of our record keeping system ever since. Over 130 fields of data are stored for every animal in the herd, as well as unlimited occurrences per animal for medical records, ROG tracking, feed cost tracking, and breeding records for females. Not only are key details like DOB, sire, dam, tattoo, metal tag information, registration records, and all weights tracked, but every medical treatment and vaccination is recorded. Every time an animal is weighed, the weight is recorded and the ROG calculated. Breeding records include A.I sire and date, up to 3 pasture exposure bulls and timeframes (per season), tracking of pregnancy check dates and results, and subsequent calf delivery information, just to name a few. Calving records create new individual records in the database for each calf. Reports can be run from literally any field(s) in the database – the possibilities are endless. Numerous reports are at our fingertips daily, from how many cattle are in each location (summary or details), to upcoming calving due dates and breeding and pregnancy details, to a detailed listing of calves born during each particular season. Any reports that aren't already available can be written and added within minutes. This information is not only key for our management of day-to-day processes and decision making, but it allows us to provide ultimate customer service touches, such as sales invoices that include a complete health history of each animal (which could be taken to the new owner's vet to show exactly what an animal has had in the past). With both 'Active' and 'Disposed' screens, we can easily make recommendations for repeat customers of what prior animals and bloodlines they have purchased, and what animals that are currently 'For Sale' would be options if they want to stay away from past bloodlines. We can recommend which bull(s) to use on progeny from an earlier bull they purchased, for example. This detailed database also allows for tracking of future sales of animals where reservations have been taken, but delivery may not happen for months or more. The database allows for complete accountability and traceability in the herd.

Unique approaches that may set Lenth Herefords apart from most other seed stock operations is the 'early-reservation' process we offer, and our custom 'bred heifer development program.' For both bulls and females, customers may reserve cattle that they want to purchase for a future breeding season by placing a down payment on the animal. We will then feed, house, and continue developing the animal(s) until an agreed upon timeframe. Spring bull calves that are selected any time from pre-weaning through the following season, will be fed through the winter, must pass a breeding soundness exam, yearling weight and information are gathered and recorded, and the new owner takes possession when it coordinates with their breeding season. It has become common for customers to cull an older bull in the fall, and immediately select their new bull for next year, knowing that they don't have to house a bull over the winter. For females, the heifers may be selected and received as open heifer calves, or for an additional fee and down payment, we will continue to raise them through the upcoming breeding season, coordinating timing and sire selection with the new owner, and verify the female is in-calf prior to the new owner taking possession. This allows customers to make choices up-front while selections is at its best, as receive bred heifers developed in a strong seed stock program, pregnant to an A.I. sire of Lenth bull. In many cases, there are 'package deals' selected in this way, where a customer may select several heifers, and an 'unrelated bull' that will then be used on them the following year. For our 2017 Spring calf crop just weaned this month, four bull calves are already reserved for 2018 summer possession, five heifer calves are already sold for possession this fall as open heifer, and 13 heifer calves are already reserved on the 'bred heifer development program' for Fall 2018 possession, calving in Spring 2019. There are 4 other fall heifers currently in the 'bred heifer development program' for Fall 2018 calving season. By selling all cattle through Private Treaty sales, offering the early-reservation option, and having both Spring and Fall calving season, cattle are available for purchase literally year-round, differing from operations with an annual production sale that only have cattle available for sale at one or two times each year. When we are 'sold out' of particular types of animals, we maintain a 'waiting list'.

Some marketing approaches have remained consistent over the years in Lenth Herefords, while others have adapted with the times. While the core values of providing sound, fertile, highly productive cattle remain the same, the methods of marketing those cattle has evolved. Print media is still used to gain attention and maintain an advertising presence, but we have now added social media (Facebook) and the primary marketing tool today has become our Lenth Herefords website. I personally focus on maintain the information on the website, and it has become a marketing "tool" not only for customers that are nearby, but also those that are across the country. Internet has become the 'go to' search tool, and our website addresses that mode of shopping. A simple search for 'Lenth Herefords' on any search engine will bring you to our site. On our Lenth Herefords website you will find not only a history and candid photos of our operation, but you will find the details on every animal 'For Sale'. Pedigrees, statistics, footnotes, and photos are provided on each animal, and most have video clips as well. Animals already reserved will have a status of 'SOLD' under their photo until removed, but shoppers can easily see what they have to choose from on any given day. Shoppers can trust that the website

is kept current – an animal sold today will reflect a ‘Sold’ status later today or tomorrow. A link to a ‘Bull Comparison and Stat Sheet’ brings up a fact-filled sheet that provides a visual comparison of the traits of each bull available, to help shoppers drill-down quickly to the bulls best meeting their personal needs. Shopper can also see all Lenth Herefords sires on the ‘Herd Bull’ page, and if they want to see the size, conformation, or udder quality of the Dam of a particular animal, they just need to go to the ‘Cow Herd’ page to see photos of all of our cows and replacement females. While prospective buyers are encouraged to personally visit and look at cattle, even for people within driving distance, that can be difficult. For prospects living several states away, that can be impossible. The website has made it possible to finalize sales not only in Iowa and ALL surrounding states, but also as far away as Ohio, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, California and Mexico in the past few years. One customer was working in China while the communications and sales process was taking place before he retired back home to the States. As arranged, we made delivery of his new small ‘herd’ to his home in Ohio the day after he flew home from China to begin retirement. The website can be credited with being totally responsible for, or assisting in, 49% of our sales in 2014, growing to 70% of sales so far in 2017.

Short-term and long-term goals go hand-in-hand in Lenth Herefords. Our short-term goals are to continue to maintain a solid genetic base of structurally sound, high performing cattle, while bringing in complementing new bloodlines periodically to enable us to continue offering genetic options to our repeat customers. This past month, we took an 11-day Hereford touring trip through the Dakota’s, Wyoming, and Montana, visiting 9 nationally known Hereford ranches, a bull stud station, and one large commercial herd, in order to learn about their herds, their Hereford sires offered, studying which Hereford genetics work them in various environments and conditions, and which may be the best ‘fits’ for our program. While certain bloodlines may be working well for us today, we continually need to be ready to offer new options for repeat bull buyers who already have those daughters. Another short-term goal is to help our customers achieve their own unique, personal goals and be as efficient as possible on sale at a time. By doing those things, we can build on our long-term goal of maintain a sustainable Hereford seed stock business that both Doug and I love and continue to have a passion for.