

## Farm Update

All of the 2016 calves have been born and are “running” the pastures. We still have limited availability on both heifer and bull calves in addition to a couple of brood cows. Many of next year’s calf crop are already in development with the sex of some 2017 calves already known. Please contact us for further information. Our delivery to the Mid-West will be in late July this year. (Our delivery to the Mid-West next year will be in October 2017.)

Fortunately weather conditions this year have been much more favorable to pasture growth. Last year we started to feed some grass hay in late June because of the lack of rain while this year will be more normal with pasture grass through most of August. Hay prices are down so that is also helpful.

[The following article has been revised in May 2020 to reflect changes in the Heritage Shorthorn Industry]

### Quarterly Topic: Heritage (Native) Shorthorns Versus Modern Shorthorns

Choosing the type of Shorthorn to raise is a personal choice depending on interest and goals. Frequently there is confusion as to what constitutes a true Shorthorn since the use of the term Shorthorn has many adjectives including blue roan Shorthorns which are essentially Angus crosses. I will not consider Milking Shorthorns in this discussion. Heritage (Native) Shorthorn pedigrees directly trace to the Coates Herd Book of 1822 in England with no introduction of other cattle breeds into the pedigree. Modern Shorthorns became a reality when appendix registrations were introduced by the American Shorthorn Association (ASA) in 1973 to try to increase the appeal of the Shorthorn breed to commercial cattle breeders. Appendix registrations allowed other breeds to be incorporated in the makeup of a Shorthorn and still be registered in the ASA. The primary breed used was Maine Anjou.

Heritage (Native) Shorthorns (HNS) are often associated with the term “dual purpose” because originally Shorthorn cattle were developed as both a dairy and beef animal. Certainly some genetic lines tilted in one direction or the other but overall the Shorthorn breed tried to maintain the dual purpose mandate. Only in the 20th century did the split occur with the development of the separate beef and milking Shorthorns. As a result in 1948 the Shorthorn herd book split into the American Milking Shorthorn Society (dairy) and the American Shorthorn Association (beef). Subsequently true dual purpose (HNS) Shorthorns were left in the lurch. With the emergence of the Heritage Shorthorn Society (HSS) in 2018 and the Heritage Shorthorn Society Registry in 2020 the void has been filled and HNS are on their way to be “players” in the cattle industry. It

is important to note that term Native Shorthorn has been replaced by Heritage Shorthorn. The Livestock Conservancy, the arbiter in the name change, has officially gone with term Heritage Shorthorn as of September, 2019.

HNS Shorthorns are listed by the Livestock Conservancy as critically endangered and fewer than 500 are registered each year. Globally they are considered an endangered population. Their appeal continues to be their dual purpose function allowing for the production of both meat and milk—historically the “family cow” model. The American Milking Shorthorn Society developed the Native designation on Shorthorn pedigrees to indicate their purity, in that all the ancestors in the Native pedigree trace to the Coates Herd Book. The actual pedigree will have an N on it to indicate this. The Heritage Shorthorn Society has the H designation which now supersedes the native term and is designated on HSS registration papers by the letter H.

In contrast to HNS Shorthorns, Modern Shorthorns may have varying levels of genetic contributions from other breeds of cattle. To be called a “Purebred” Shorthorn under current American Shorthorn Association standards they can be 15/16 Shorthorn. There may or may not be an indication on their pedigrees what breed was added. As Modern Shorthorns evolved, through the introduction of other breeds into their pedigrees, they split primarily into Show and Commercial Shorthorns. Many will argue that it’s not true but I believe any objective observer will see the difference between the “pampered” Show cow and the rugged pasture/ranch cow. Show Ring Judges have definitely augmented the differences through selection. This is not an indictment of Show Shorthorns but an informational statement pointing out differences. Astute Shorthorn breeders/buyers can make their own decisions as to the merits of both types.

Because of the limited genetic pool of Heritage (Native) Shorthorns it is important to be very knowledgeable about pedigrees to avoid inbreeding/line breeding complications. Currently expansion of the genetic base of HNS has become a priority for many breeders and members of the Heritage Shorthorn Society. I believe there are a significant number of great HNS bulls still available (through artificial insemination) that can facilitate the broadening of the HNS genetic pool. Through proper selection, true dual-purpose quality Shorthorns can fill the niche that has emerged in the grass fed and family cow markets. The reality is that some of the same old bulls (1950’s, 60’s and early 70’s models) can also contribute to the commercial Shorthorn bull market because of the qualities that they add such as: muscling, hardiness, feed efficiency, easy calving, longevity and a myriad of other positive qualities. The easy fleshing and calving ease of many of these same bulls is well known. The difficulty is finding available semen and discerning how to use it to produce the best Native (Heritage) Shorthorns.

I have both HNS and Modern Shorthorns, although long term I will eventually have only HNS because I believe the ones which I am breeding will work in any environment. I have been fortunate to secure semen from many tremendous old bulls, which through proper genetic

management, will once again produce great dual purpose Shorthorns that buyers can employ in any cattle raising endeavor.

These are exciting times in the Shorthorn breed with many options from Heritage to Show to Commercial Shorthorns. All types have their pros and cons. Prospective Shorthorn breeders must weigh all facets of Shorthorn production, from breeding to marketing, before selecting a Shorthorn type. Having a breeding plan and then pursuing it in a thoughtful manner has the greatest chance of success. The “beauty” of the Shorthorn breed has always been its versatility. One could even say it is the “buffet” of cattle breeds because it can fill so many niches—commercial, dairy, show, family cow, grass fed beef, oxen, and utilization in many composite breeds to name some possibilities. This is the reason the Shorthorn breed was the most popular cattle breed in the world for over a hundred years.

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