

Montana Hereford Association Hosts Fall Tour Across Eastern Montana and Western North Dakota

By Lauren Weishaar

The Montana Hereford Association (MHA) hosted its fall tour from September 14-17, drawing people from across the U.S. and Canada. Over the course of three full days, attendees traveled across Eastern Montana and Western North Dakota, viewing Hereford cattle, sharing in conversation, and enjoying good beef.

The tour kicked off in Miles City, MT at the Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory. Attendees heard from Research Leader and Research Management Specialist, Jay Angerer, and Research Animal Scientist, Richard Waterman. Originally established as a U.S. Army Cavalry post, Fort Keogh began research work in the 1930s under the U.S. Forest Service. Today, it is home to the oldest and purest herd of Line 1 Herefords.

That evening, a welcome dinner was held at the Range Riders Museum, followed by a presentation from Dr. Michael MacNeil on the early research efforts of line breeding. (For book information e-mail him at: mdmacneil47@gmail.com)

The first stop on Monday was at Sparks Herefords located south of Plevna, MT. George W. and Bernetta Sparks homesteaded in 1909 on part of this ranch. Frank and Goldie Sparks brought the registered Herefords, starting with Line 1 out of Fort Keogh, Tarrington bloodline, including imported English cattle in the 1960s. Tom and Carol Sparks currently operate the ranch along with their son Will and his wife Jimmie. Son George and his wife Jess manage their own nearby operation, 7C Herefords and displayed cattle at this stop. Sparks Herefords has used the Prospector bloodline along with AI to a more recent English Sire, Sebastian, whose offspring were on display on the tour. All herd sires on display were home raised. Complete individual performance records are kept since 1956. Coming two-year-old bulls are offered for sale February 21, 2026 at the ranch.

From there, the tour continued to the Stuber Ranch just north of Bowman, ND. In 1908 John C. Stuber made a trip to North Dakota and ended up buying the land on which the ranch homestead sits today. They introduced commercial Herefords in 1918 and the first registered females were added in 1929 from W.B. Taylor, a local breeder. In 1962 40 bred females were added from Drybread Herefords in Nebraska. In 1964 40 yearling Hereford heifers were bought from Hall-Nance in Texas. In

1935 J.C bought the International Harvesert dealership which the family owned for the next 65 years. In 1935 Orville Stuber took over the ranch. In 1962, sons Dick and Roger bought the ranch and Orville moved to town to run the International Harvester dealership. In 1969, they held their first production sale. Today, the ranch is owned by Roger Stuber, sister-in-law Laureen, and her son Duane. With Duane and Dana's children — Mac, Mitch, Mace, and Mika — they are the fifth generation of ownership. They run about 1,000 cows, both commercial and registered Herefords, farm 7,000 acres of crop and hay land and graze about 19,000 acres of leased and owned land. For 48 years Stubers have been in a retained ownership program feeding three to four pens of cattle per year. Their 58th Annual Production Sale will be held on the third Sunday in April, featuring horned and polled yearling bulls, fall bulls, and both registered and commercial yearling heifers.

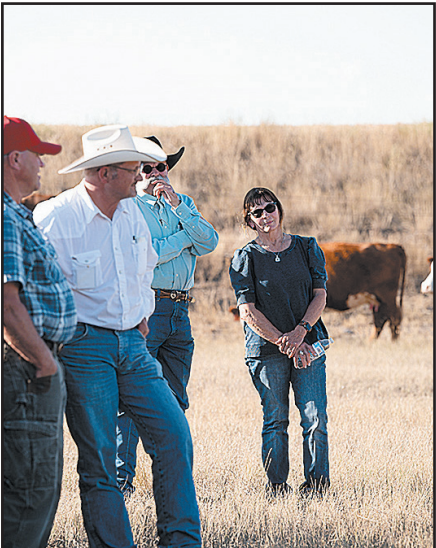
The next stop was at the Mrnak Hereford Ranch, located five miles south of Bowman. The first Herefords were purchased in 1944 by Jim Mrnak's father, Wencil, who laid the foundation for the ranch. In 1968, they held their first production sale, offering 50 Hereford bulls. Brent and Jenna Mrnak, along with their four boys and Brent's dad, Terry, own and operate the ranch, with Grandma Marlene, age 92, still keeping up with daily operations. Andy Mrnak helps with marketing and John Andras spearheads the catalog, sale and pasture pictures, and pitches in during calving season. Daily, the Mrnak Hereford Ranch also receives help from Christian (VA) Deavers, Justin Anderson, Nelly Anderson, and Kevin Fischer. Their 59th Annual Production Sale will be held on January 20, 2026, offering horned and polled yearling bulls, two-year-old bulls, registered and commercial bred heifers, and F1 baldy replacement females. Also on display were cattle from EF1 Cattle Company of Carpio, ND. Travis and Summer Engelhard, along with their family, raise Line 1 horned Herefords. They market two-year-old bulls through an online sale each February, backed by a two-year breeding guarantee, ensuring customer satisfaction and confidence in their program.

The final stop of the day was Baumgarten Cattle Company in Belfield, ND — a family-run operation raising registered Hereford cattle for 111 years. The Baumgar-

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Tour attendees listen as Jay Angerer explains the program at Fort Keogh.



Tim and LaMecia Stidham of Bowling Ranch, Newkirk, Okla.



Ross Carlson of Carlson Herefords, Murdock, Minn.



Richard Waterman, Research Animal Scientist at Fort Keogh.



Dr. Michael MacNeil shares the early research behind breeding Line 1 Herefords.

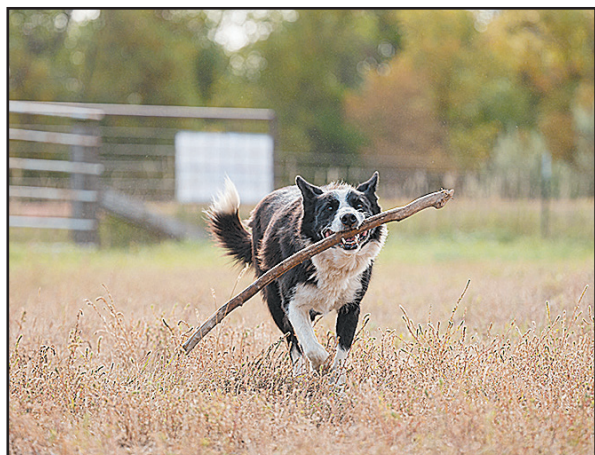


Ethan Beery and fiancé Ashton Handy.



Jay Angerer, Research Leader and Research Management Specialist at Fort Keogh.

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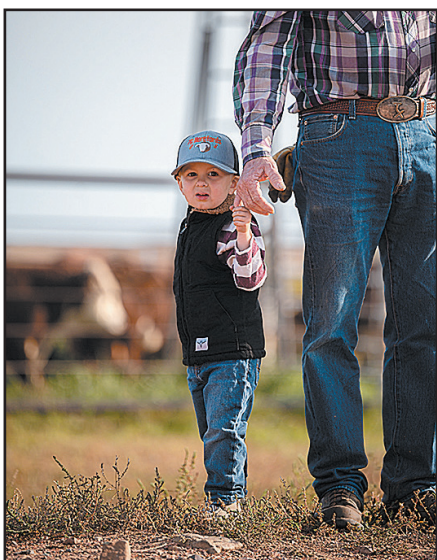
The Sparks' best ranch hand — Millie.



Tour attendees in conversation during the stop at the Sparks Ranch.



L to R: Cotton Thomas (CT), Jimmie and William Sparks



Kix Sparks



George Sparks explaining their operation, 7C Herefords.



Tom Sparks telling about the Sparks Herefords program.



Ivan Blume and Nyle Stromsmoe.



L to R: Duane Stuber, Mike and Landon Doyle (Doyle Hereford Ranch).



Judy and Doug Finseth of Finseth Herefords, Bardo, Alberta.



L to R: Mac Stuber, Lynda Bird (Bird Herefords, Halfway, OR), and Tom Duprel (Sturgis, SD.)



Russ Houck of Houck Ranch, Inc., Wibaux, Mont.



Eric Lawver, Chaney Bowen and Lane Nickles.



A group of tour attendees view the cow-calf pairs on display at Stuber Ranch.



Nice pair at Sparks Herefords, Plevna, MT.

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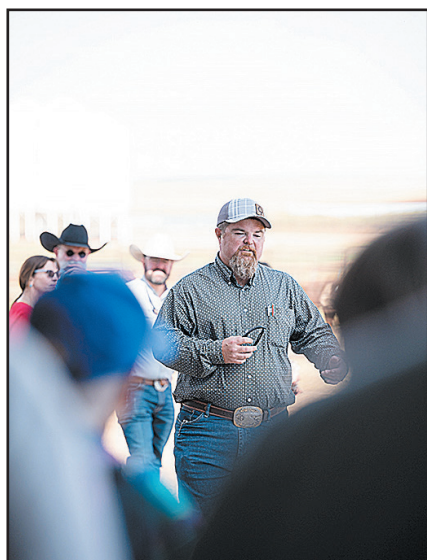
Ethan Beery



Tour attendees view the bull calf pairs on display at the Mrnak Hereford Ranch.



Dan Bixler and Barry McConnell of Illinois.



Travis Engelhard explains their operation, EF1 Cattle Company, to tour attendees.



Brent Mrnak speaking at their tour stop at the ranch near Bowman, ND.



Bruce Thomas of Thomas Herefords, Gold Creek, MT.



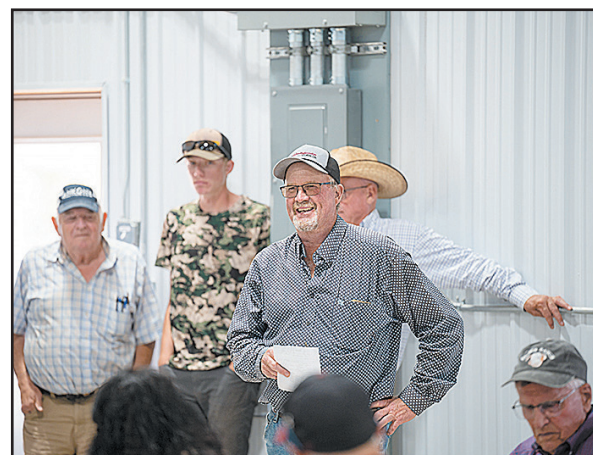
Terry Mrnak, Mrnak Herefords.



Wes and Vanessa Van Sickle of Rafter Double U Ranch, Red Deer County, Alberta.



Shawn Weishaar of Lemmon, SD.



Rollie Baumgarten introduces his family and shares the history of Baumgarten Cattle Company.



L to R: Ethan Beery of Vida, MT and Calvin Johnson of Sidney, MT.



Theodore, son of Jake and Savanna Baumgarten.



Jake Baumgarten



L to R: Margaret, Andy and Daniel Schuepbach of Lilybrook Herefords, Claresholm, Alberta.

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A steady crowd forms at Friedt Herefords.



The Duprel family of Sturgis, SD — Lane, Colt, Berniece and Marge.



Gary and Kirsten Friedt talk with the Duprel family of Sturgis, SD.



Hunter Dukart sticks to the smaller stock — his cat, TJ.



Holden Dukart and show heifer, Darla.



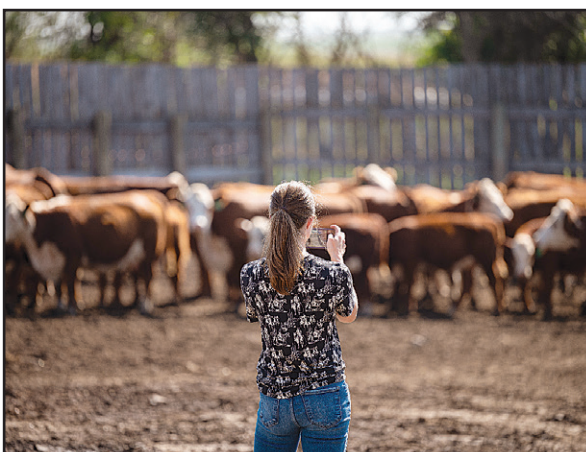
Gary Friedt introduces his family and gives a brief history of Friedt Herefords.



Scott Dirk, Scott Weishaar, Kevin Murnin, Aaron Friedt, Eric Lawver, and Ivan Blume.



Craig Pelton welcomes everyone to Pelton Herefords.



Kayla Pelton Durrell



Lynda Bird of Bird Herefords, Halfway, OR and Ivan Blume of 4/0 Blume Ranch, Zell, S.D.



Kevin Murnin of Worden, MT (Field Representative for the Western Livestock Journal) and Dave Hanson of Willow Creek, Mont., viewing cattle at Pelton Polled Herefords.



Eric Lawver (MHA President) of Valier, MT speaking with Tim Stidham of Bowling Ranch, Newkirk, OK.



Dan Bixler of Newton, IL.



Earl Pelton

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ten family began farming near Casselton in 1885, and their Hereford herd traces back to 1914, when local farmer Ben Hans purchased his first registered cattle. In 1921, his daughter and Richard Baumgarten received 10 bred heifers as a wedding gift. The operation has since expanded and even earned recognition in the show ring, including awards at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, CO. Today, the operation includes Rollie and Wendy Baumgarten, their children, Isaiah and Benjamin, and their son Jake, along with his wife, Savanna, and their children, Theodore, Colt, and Lainey. The annual production sale is held the first-Friday in February, and features yearling bulls, two-year-old bulls, registered bred heifers, and commercial yearling heifers.

Tuesday started with a visit to Friedt Herefords in Mott, ND. Gary Friedt began the herd as a junior in high school when he bought yearling heifers. It is a family-run operation, with Gary and his wife, Kirsten, joined by daughter Megan and her husband Dusty Dukart, along with their sons Hudson, Hoyt, Hayes, Holden, Heston, and Hunter. Also part of the operation are son Aaron and his wife Tatian, and their son Cannon. Daughter Lindsey, her husband Drew, and their children Graham, Avery, Ella, and Claire live near Oakes, ND, and help out when their farming schedules allow. The ranch continues to focus on raising functional and efficient cattle designed to do well in a commercial setting. Their annual production sale will be held on February 11, 2026, and will feature yearling bulls, coming two-year-old bulls, registered and commercial yearling heifers, and F1 baldy replacement females.

Next was Pelton Polled Herefords near Halliday, ND, where attendees enjoyed traditional fleshkiekla and knoephla soup. The ranch started in 1972 as a 4-H project by Craig Pelton and has grown into a strong family operation. They focus on raising reliable, easy-calving cattle, without sacrificing hardiness or weight gain – important traits for commercial ranchers. Today, Craig's daughter Kayla and her husband Tyrun, along with their kids Kaisley and Conner, and his son Kain with his wife Abbey and their son Rowan, all work together to keep the family legacy alive. Their annual Cattlemen's Choice Sale takes place on the first Monday in February and features Hereford and Angus bulls, registered Hereford heifers, and F1 baldy replacement females.

The last stop on Tuesday was at the Stroh Hereford Ranch near Killdeer, ND. Founded in 1950 by Tony and Leona Stroh, the operation began with influential bloodlines like Mischief, Diamond, and Bonanza. Today, Mike and Dawn Stroh, along with their son Matt, carry on the family tradition of raising high-performing, functional cattle that meet the needs of the modern cattleman. Their 36th Annual Ranch-Ready Production Sale will be held on February 6, 2026, featuring two-year-old bulls and a select group of females from the heart of their program.

Wednesday began at the J Bar E Ranch in Plentywood, MT, where Arvid and

Linda Eggen's family welcomed everyone with a steak and egg breakfast. Founded in 1898 by Arvid's great-grandfather, John Eggen, and great-uncle, Andrew Fadness, J Bar E has a rich history of over 125 years. The ranch is currently owned by Lorrie Eggen, with help from her son, Jarrett, his wife, Livy, and their three children, Logan, Haddie, and Rowley, as well as Arvid and Linda, who continue to lend a hand when needed. Today, with the involvement of the fourth, fifth, and sixth generations, they continue their dedication to raising thick, fault-free Herefords in Northeast Montana. Each year, the J Bar E Ranch offers yearling and two-year-old bulls by private treaty.

The tour concluded at Beery Land and Livestock in Vida, MT, a ranch with deep roots dating back to 1912 when Lawrence Beery first entered the cattle business. In 1940, his nephew, Newell Beery, purchased his first set of registered Hereford cows, quickly earning a reputation for high-quality feeder cattle. Over the decades, the Beery family expanded their registered herd, sourcing genetics from across Montana and North Dakota. Despite challenges like drought and economic downturns, the Beerys have remained committed to breeding honest, sound, and adaptable cattle, well-suited to the harsh conditions of Eastern Montana. Today, the operation is run by Joanne Beery, Matt and his wife Krista, their children Leah and Ethan, Ethan's fiancée Ashton Handy, and herdsman Madri Blom. Their intensive AI program was built by Madri, who has been with Beery Land and Livestock since 2006. Each year, Hereford and Red Angus bulls are available by private treaty.

There was a strong sense of excitement on the tour about the future of the breed. As the cattle industry faces new challenges and opportunities, many see even greater potential in the Hereford breed, especially in crossbreeding programs. Producers are recognizing the added value Hereford genetics bring to their herds, especially through improved fertility, docility, longevity, and added pounds at weaning and finishing.

"We're living in exciting times in the cattle industry, and it's even more exciting within the Hereford breed," said Ethan Beery of Beery Land and Livestock. "Producers are ready to add value to their heifers and increase pounds on their steers come payday, and quality Hereford bulls are a great way to do that."

Beery added, "This was the first time in 52 years we had hosted a tour at our ranch. We partnered with breeders from a wider region to make it successful. Most of the bulls offered will cover black cows, which shows how much Hereford genetics are gaining acceptance. It's encouraging to see the growing demand, and I'm excited about where this momentum will take us."

The upcoming MHA Fall Tour is scheduled to be in Billings, MT in 2027.

Editor's Note: On October 20th I received the news that Carol Sparks had passed away after a very brief illness. Our deepest condolences to the Sparks family.

— Jill Hotchkiss



Matt Stroh welcomes everyone to the Stroh Hereford Ranch.



Dave Hanson



The coming 2-year-old bulls at the Stroh Ranch drew plenty of attention from tour attendees.



Dawn Stroh and Cathy Largent.



Mark Largent



Mike Stroh



Denise Loyning

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The daughters of Livy and Jarrett Eggen, Haddie (left) and Logan (right).



Arvid and Linda Eggen welcome everyone to the J Bar E Ranch.



Chaney Bowen and Lane Nickles, Torgersons.



Lynda Bird and Shari Leachman.



A steak and eggs breakfast at J Bar E Ranch, thanks to support from sponsors like Stockman Bank.



Lorrie Eggen and daughter Kacie Lynn.



J Bar E Ranch, since 1898.



Ethan Beery and Madri Blom welcome everyone and share a bit about their family, friends, and the program's history.



Classic Hereford sign that has hung on Beery's barn for many years. Still a valid message.



Joanne Beery still going strong and visiting with the tour crowd. Joanne and Arvid Eggen are siblings.



Great-grandchildren of Joanne Beery — Swayze and Landry Switzer, and Nolan Fleming.



Madri Blom and Mike and Landon Doyle of Doyle Hereford Ranch, Wolfe City, Texas.



Matt Beery, Tom and Berniece Duprel of Sturgis, SD and Calvin Johnson of Sidney, MT.



Earl Jensen from Roundup, MT has seen a lot in his 100+ years. He was a special guest at the Beery stop.