

## Bonica passes the reins

Outgoing World Hereford Council (WHC) Secretary General Jose (Pepe) Bonica, Uruguay, recently attended his last World Hereford Conference, while representing the globe's Hereford breeders. In a meeting held in conjunction with the 2020 conference, WHC country delegates elected Larry Feeney of Ireland as the incoming secretary general. During his eight-year, two-term tenure, which began Jan. 1, 2013, Bonica has attended council meetings in Canada, Uruguay and New Zealand. "There is always something to learn from somebody else," he says.

As a leader and life-long learner, Bonica is a huge proponent of face-to-face meetings, noting the value that stems from people meeting and shaking hands. Conversations and comradery draws Bonica to Hereford events around the world, including the Beef Improvement Federation Research Symposium and Convention in the U.S.

Bonica insists Hereford breeders must stick together to achieve results. He points out there are many global challenges cattle producers must address, primarily animal welfare concerns and finding ways to relate with people who live in cities.

In regards to addressing animal welfare, Bonica says Hereford breeders can universally promote the breed's disposition and good temperament. "You can allow your grandchildren to play with a Hereford bull without a handler with no fear at all," he notes. "That's something you don't know the price of until you become a grandfather."

For Hereford breeders worldwide, Bonica has two challenges: "Within your farm, you have to learn to study and to be updated with all new technologies. Outside your farm, you have to tell your story to people in the cities — it's your responsibility."

Bonica's perspectives stem from his world travels and his background living in both rural and urban communities. He grew up on his family's farm until he was 6 years old, moved to a local town for elementary school, and then ventured to Uruguay's capital city, Montevideo, to finish secondary studies and to attend university, where he studied agronomy. Out of college he was offered a job on a rice farm, a commodity in which he had no experience. Following his dad's recommendation, he gave large-scale rice farming a shot and has been working in rice and cattle production ever since.

As the second smallest country in South America, Uruguay has one of the strongest agricultural markets on the continent. It is also home to many passionate cattlemen. In Uruguay, "cattle" does not refer to just any breed.

"When I say cattle, I mean Hereford," Bonica clarifies. "Hereford is the main breed in my country — it is extremely popular."

The Hereford Uruguay organization is supported by about 500 members, representing 10,000 animals per year. "The Hereford success in my country relies on the people," Bonica says. "We like to say, 'No breed is better than its breeders.'"

Bonica believes this motto holds true for Hereford breeders worldwide, and is confident in the breed's continued growth. He hopes he contributed to this success during his time as secretary general, and is thankful for the opportunities he was provided during his service.

"I'm very glad to say I have no regrets on what the Hereford breed has provided for me, and I hope I was able to give something in return," Bonica reflects. "I have been blessed with many friends within the Hereford family, and I hope to all always keep those friendships, at least in my heart."



Incoming World Hereford Council Secretary General Larry Feeney (I) of Ireland poses with outgoing Secretary General Jose (Pepe) Bonica of Uruguay. Feeney is the secretary for the Irish Hereford Breed Society, a post he has held for over 30 years.