



# Ranch Help at Your Fingertips

Today's tools of the trade include a myriad of mobile apps.

by *Katrina Huffstutler*

Miles from the Yards at a busy Denver restaurant, a group of cattlemen sit at a table for eight in complete silence. They're crowded around a single iPad watching a sale in real time while they wait for their steaks to be served.

Somewhere on the Plains, it's after midnight when a breeder thinks of something he just has to add to his website. He doesn't consider himself tech-savvy and is much more comfortable with expected progeny differences (EPDs) than HTML. But he can update the information on one of his sires with a few swipes on his Android phone.

### The times they are a changin'

In the five years since the now-trademarked "There's an app for that" catchphrase was first uttered in an iPhone ad, apps (applications) have been developed and downloaded for just about every topic imaginable. And not just for Apple devices. Comparably, Android phones and tablets have more than one million apps available through their Google Play store.

The agricultural industry has its fair share of apps, and Hereford breeders are taking advantage at an increasing rate.

Katie Colyer, a representative for *LiveAuctions.tv*, says the company launched its app a little more than a year ago. The idea was to allow producers to see an auction even if they couldn't get to their computers. With Apple devices not supporting Flash, that access was impossible for many users before creation of this app.

But in the 13 months after its release, the app turned into so much more. People started using it at shows so they could monitor what classes were in the ring at the time without having to leave the stalls or tie outs.

Downtime on the road? Users can browse upcoming auctions and place a bid in advance. The app could even be used at an auction to chat with a



representative or to bid in real time.

One of the latest additions, Katie says, is the ability for users to start an auction through the app by uploading photos from their phones or tablets, clerk their auctions and even broadcast an auction with the built-in video and audio

broadcasting tool.

"As long as you've got a good signal, you can do it," Katie says. "Brad [Fahrmeier, Live Auctions] has tested the feature with great success at farm auctions and lectures."

In addition to her affiliation with the auction company, Katie is an integral part of her family's Idaho cattle operation, especially when it comes to show and sale preparations. She says as a producer, she's impressed with how much good the app can do its users.

"Your cattle can be seen by such a larger audience now," she says. "There's really a great potential to increase your bottom line."

Tonya Perez is another techie Hereford breeder with two gigs. She and her husband, Kyle, are part of the C and M Herefords operation based in New Mexico, while Tonya also works for her parents' company, AgTown Technologies. The website and graphic design agency is best known perhaps for Virtual Herd, its application built on the cloud that provides breeders centralized data storage to securely store, access and manage all types of data, pictures and videos. That means website customers who prefer to do their own updates and save a little money in the process can do so easily and efficiently.

Tonya said the program is a content management service "like WordPress, but for the ag industry."

"We built it to where our clients can log into their websites and add herd sires and donors," she says. "And



### Keep up-to-date with the Hereford Events app.

Hereford enthusiasts can get the latest news and updates straight from their mobile devices. Launched in 2013, the Hereford Events app was designed to provide up-to-date information about Hereford events such as the American Hereford Association (AHA) Annual Meeting, the Junior National Hereford Expo, and national shows and sales.

The app can be downloaded via Google

Play or Apple stores, making it compatible with iPhone and Android phones. By downloading the app, users can receive exclusive alerts and notifications; view and download resources including national show programs and sale catalogs, board biographies, contest schedules and much more; access maps and directions to show facilities, hotels and other attractions; and submit event photos.

### Features

The "Alerts" tab is the place where staff post important information and reminders regarding events and deadlines. This function provides reminders of national show entry deadlines, show days, how users can view results online and other event information.

The app includes a "Resources" tab where documents are available to help answer the questions event attendees may have. That tab can be found on the home page.

Available resources include board biographies, contest schedules with times and locations, show programs, newsletters, sponsorships and anything else that can make an attendee's experience at these events more enjoyable.

The "YouTube" channel link under the "More" tab links the user to the herefordvideos channel. If a Hereford breeder is out in the pasture and is unable to recall how to pull hair samples for DNA testing, he can access AHA's educational videos via the app.

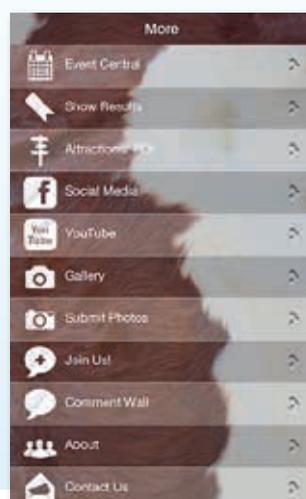
The "Schedule" tab on the home page changes focus for each upcoming event.

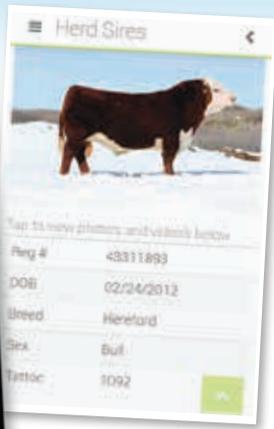
Within the tab is a link for each day of the event. Above the daily happenings, there is a tab menu including "Info," "Comments," "Attend" and "Gallery." Here users can post what they thought of the day's activities. They can also post if they are going to attend an event by first logging in to a social account by clicking the "Callouts" icon in the bottom right and then clicking "I'm Going!"

There are two ways to share photos of the events in which users participate. First, under the "Schedule" tab,

within the gallery, a user can take a photo while at that day's event and upload it to that day's gallery. Second, under the "More" tab, there is a link titled "Submit Photos." From there a user can submit a photo that could potentially be used in a Hereford publication.

The communication team updates the app weekly; therefore, it is important to refresh the application to ensure the latest news is displayed. The simplest way to refresh is to completely back out of the application to the phone's home page and then to re-enter the application. **HW**





then we built customized tools specifically for the industry, where they fill out the registration number, birthweight, yearling weight, etc. They fill in the pedigree information and then our program does all the formatting for them.”

The app keeps the customer’s website looking consistent without him having to pay for updates.

Once smartphones started gaining popularity in the livestock business, Tonya says developing an app to complement the program was

the logical next step. And the idea for it? Well, that came straight from the Yards.

“My husband, Kyle, was at Denver and wanted to show a potential customer a photo of the dam of the bull we were selling. So, here I am on our website on my phone, trying to find that specific picture.

And it was so cumbersome,” Tonya says.

So when she and Kyle returned, she went to the programming crew and said, “Hey, I think there could be a great value [in an app] for the guys who are on the road a lot.”

Nowadays, all that Virtual Herd users have to do is go to the website, pull up the pic and hand their phone over to the interested party.

“They can just say, ‘Hey, here’s the pedigree, here’s the picture, and also here’s the dam, the sire, and maternal grandsire.’ They can show them right there on the spot to help make the sale,” she says.

Tonya says the app has evolved into a window into a user’s entire herd.

Once logged in, the user can search for a tag number, and choosing that number brings up the pedigree and EPDs on that animal.

“Let’s say a bull buyer stops by the ranch,” Tonya says. “They see something that just trips their trigger and they really want to know more about that animal. You can type in that tag number and pull up the pedigree. It really helps the owner remember who that animal is and make sure they’re giving out the right information.”

She says it’s especially helpful for ranchers who have a job in town, too, and may have a harder time remembering every little detail about each animal. But even for the full-time cattlemen who do have pedigrees committed to memory, it’s still one of their most-used apps.

“We’re in a 24/7 world,” she says. “Being able to access that information instantly as you need it is very, very valuable.”

It seems many ranchers agree. In a recent Facebook poll, a host of ag-related apps were mentioned as anything from necessities to, at the very least, helpful for doing business. Some of the most popular were the Hereford Events app,

CattleFax, and iCattleMgrPro and iLivestockMgr. And several general apps, not developed specifically for the industry, were must-haves as well. Among them are various weather apps, EverNote and Google Maps.

Tom and Tammy Boatman, co-managers of Perks Ranch in Illinois, say they use mobile apps on a daily basis. Most are general; many come with phones and tablets these days, but all save them time and allow them to be more efficient.

Tammy says the Notes app is one of their favorites.

“Tom enters important information like breeding dates, etc. into his phone and doesn’t have to worry about losing pieces of paper,” she says. “He then messages me the info and I can enter it into our computer.”

And with 2014 being their kids’ first Junior National Hereford Expo, she says the Hereford app was invaluable, keeping up with the schedule of events and making sure everyone was at the right place at the right time.

There’s a lot to keep up with on the ranch. Luckily, there are a whole lot of apps for that. **HW**