

Beyond His Wildest Dreams

The 2014 Hereford Herdsman of the Year saw many dreams realized at the NWSS.

by *Christy Couch Lee*



Pictured at the 2014 National Western Stock Show (l to r) are: Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president; Daniel Fawcett, 2014 Herdsman of the Year; Brooke Jensen, 2013-14 National Hereford Queen; and John Meents, AHA fieldman.



Daniel attributes his success to seeking advice and learning from many mentors in the industry.

To be the breeder and owner of the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) champion polled Hereford bull is the aspiration of many. To also hear your name announced as the Hereford Herdsman of the Year? A distant chance.

Obtaining both in the same year was only a dream for Daniel Fawcett, Fawcett's Elm Creek Ranch, Ree Heights, S.D. That is, until it happened.

"I'm still trying to figure out what has happened — I'm just blown away by it all," he says. "It was just a dream to claim the champion polled Hereford bull title in December, and now it's true with ECR Who Maker 210 ET. And to win Herdsman of the Year? Many friends have received this award in the past. It's an honor to be a part of that group."

Daniel was chosen as the 2014 Hereford Herdsman of the Year at the NWSS in Denver. He was selected for the award by his peers — other Hereford herdsman and breeders — and was honored prior to the selection of the supreme champion Hereford Jan. 18.

A cattleman's lineage

Daniel's family has a strong legacy in the cattle industry. In 1906 his great-

grandfather, John, began raising cattle on 800 acres of prime grazing land in South Dakota.

The operation has grown and has been handed down through the generations. In 1985 Daniel's grandfather, Robert, and parents, Keith and Cheryl, established Fawcett's Elm Creek Ranch together.

When Daniel was a child, Fawcett's Elm Creek Ranch was primarily a commercial cow-calf operation. However, when he was 12, the Fawcetts purchased their first purebred Hereford cattle. Today, the Fawcetts market 100-120 bulls annually.

Daniel grew up showing Herefords through 4-H, FFA and the National Junior Hereford Association and exhibited at nearly every Junior National Hereford Expo for which he was eligible. The time he spent working alongside his dad and grandpa was priceless, Daniel says.

"They were the biggest influences in my life," he says. "I think about it often. They allowed me to work the sorting gate and work with replacement heifers when I was probably too young to do it. They taught me work ethic and drive, and were right beside me as I grew in the industry."

Kevin Jensen, Courtland, Kan., says Daniel's upbringing is one of his greatest attributes.

"We see it so often with good farm kids who want to raise cattle and do it the right way," Kevin says. "Besides showing cattle, Daniel has a passion for raising good cattle and maintaining accurate records. And that's a real cowboy."

In addition to working at home, Daniel also has assisted some of the leading Hereford herds in the country, including that of the Jensens. And one particular trip to the NWSS when working for the Jensen family will always stand out in his memory: 10 years ago, he worked alongside a gal from Canada named Kari, who would eventually become his wife.

After majoring in agricultural journalism at South Dakota State University, he married Kari and returned to the family operation. Today, he is the primary manager of the family's registered cow herd, responsible for the bred heifer development program and the



breeding program, which includes artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer. He is also involved with the show steers and heifers on the family ranch.

Daniel also has an eye for the industry's elite cattle, having judged state and regional shows on the East Coast, as well as at local fairs and jackpot shows.

He and his wife, Kari, now have two children: Hollis, 4, and Ivy, 2. He says Kari is his rock.

"My wife is very supportive — throughout AI season, which is sunup to sundown — she's always there to support me," he says.

And, Daniel says, they are proud to raise their children in this industry, as well.

"We want our children to have the opportunity to go out and travel and meet people," he says. "If they choose to do something else, that's fine. But we'd love for one or both to come back to the ranch. As long as they are successful, we will be happy. And I'm sure they will be."

Kevin says the Hereford industry needs more producers with this mindset.

"We need more young people his age raising families in the breed," he says. "That's the secret to survival in anything



Daniel Fawcett (center, tan) was surrounded by family and friends after receiving the 2014 Hereford Herdsman of the Year award, including (l to r): Erin Fawcett, Lane Peterson, Troy Williamson, Clay Duxbury, Cheryl Fawcett, Keith Fawcett, Ryan Ollerich, and Kristin Fawcett.

— not just the Hereford industry — to have young families involved."

Daniel says he is passionate about the Hereford industry for two reasons: the cattle and the people.

"You can walk up and down the aisles at a national Hereford show and say 'hello' to everyone," he says. "In some other breeds, they may turn away. I love the cattle and everything about them, but it's great to be a part of this group of people."

In fact, he attributes his success in the industry to those people — many

of whom he considers to be mentors. And those mentors are confident in his contributions to the breed.

Kevin says the beef industry can greatly benefit from Daniel's contributions for years to come.

"He's undoubtedly the type of person who would be a great

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Tips from the 2014 Hereford Herdsman of the Year

Daniel Fawcett, Ree Heights, S.D., was recently named the 2014 Hereford Herdsman of the Year at the National Western Stock Show. He shares these tips for success in the industry.

Be involved. "The most important thing you can do is be involved," Daniel says. "Parents — help your children get involved in the National Junior Hereford Association, 4-H and FFA."

Do the work. "If you don't put anything into it, you won't get anything out of it," he says.

Practice, practice, practice. "When it comes to grooming, clipping and fitting, it takes years of practice," Daniel says. "If someone you admire is working around you, pay attention and learn. I'm still learning and getting better, and I'm 32 years old."

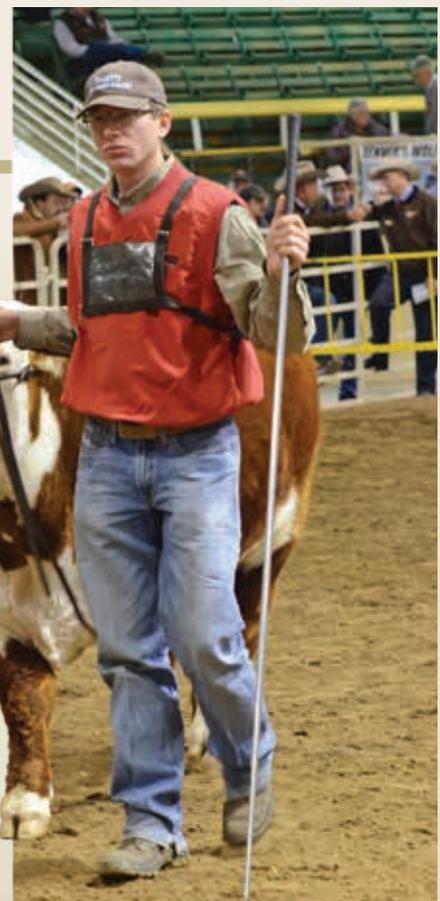
Mentors matter. "Find a mentor — someone you look up to," he says. "Find someone who is doing what you want to do, someone who is

how you want to be. And surround yourself with people like that."

Be humble, yet personable.

"A lot of people don't notice me when I go through the barns, because I don't make a bunch of noise," Daniel says with a smile. "But you must also be able to talk to people, and to listen to them, too."

Never be satisfied. "Stay hungry," he says. "I believe being satisfied is like giving up. If you reach your goals, set bigger ones and keep pushing yourself. A goal of mine was to win Denver, and we did that. But it doesn't mean I'm satisfied. To me, it's just the beginning." **HW**



attribute on the board of directors — whether it be in the Hereford breed or the cattle industry, as a whole,” he says. “He wants to raise cattle the right way. We need those grassroots folks.”

Daniel’s father, Keith, says Daniel is the epitome of a true Hereford herdsman.

“He is the definition of a true Hereford enthusiast,” he says. “He is an asset to Fawcett’s Elm Creek Ranch, as well as to the cattle industry.”

In addition to learning from others, Daniel has also left his mark with younger producers, as well.

Leaving his mark

It doesn’t take long to realize Daniel is a man of few words. His sister, Erin, says his humble, quiet demeanor speaks volumes of his character.

“A few years ago, he and I were riding together, checking pastures for newborn calves,” she recalls. “I was babbling away as always, and he was pretty quiet, as usual. I pointed out to him, ‘Danny, you don’t talk very much.’ He replied, ‘The less someone talks, the more people listen.’ He listens to the people he’s talking to, and those people count on an honest, straightforward conversation.”

Erin says his selfless approach to caring for the livestock also is a great example for other young cattlemen.

“Cattle come first, before supper, sleep, holidays and recreation,” she says. “I’ve seen Daniel on a four-wheeler in downpours, blizzards and extreme heat, taking care of Herefords before worrying about himself. He sacrifices meals to finish a job before dark, sleeps a couple of hours a night during calving season, and frequently puts in 15-hour days. And he never complains. Instead, he usually has to put in a little extra energy toward cheerfully motivating his three younger siblings to keep up when all four of us have reached exhaustion, but the job isn’t yet done.”

Daniel’s sister, Kristin, says he has been a great example of a person who enjoys his work.

“He has taught me that you are not showing up for work if you love what you do,” she says. “When we are out working, he always seems to find fun in the work we do, and helps instill a love for the ranch life in us.”

Daniel has always been devoted to helping his younger siblings succeed, as well, Kristin says.

“Danny has taught me about many different aspects of life — from the showing to living life,” she says. “Since the day I started showing, he has never been afraid to critique ‘what I’m doing wrong’ in the showing. It didn’t always end in a smile, but I give all credit to him for the way I present our cattle in the ring.”

Daniel is an asset not only to the Fawcett family but to the Hereford industry as a whole, Erin says.

“He is wise beyond his years and has a passion for Herefords that comes from the soul,” she says. “Daniel is humble, wise and selfless — a true leader among the Hereford family.” **HW**