



Hereford Herdsman: Takes Pride in Work



Pictured at the Hereford Herdsman of the Year presentation (l to r) are: Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president, Kansas City, Mo.; Don Yoesel, 2007 Hereford Herdsman of the Year, Falls City, Neb.; Jack Evans, AHA president, Winona, Miss.; and Wes Hudson, AHA director, Harrison, Ark.

Perfectionist, steady, quiet, listener and professional are some of the words Hereford breeders use to describe the 2007 Hereford Herdsman of the Year Don Yoesel. Don was selected for the award by his peers — other Hereford herdsmen — and

honored prior to the selection of the champion horned Hereford bull on Jan. 13 during the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver.

Living near Falls City, Neb., all his life, Don grew up showing polled Herefords on the state and national level. He now farms with his family in southeast Nebraska and northeast Kansas. Although his family operation — which includes a herd of Herefords and raising corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa — keeps him busy, he has always made time through the years to share his talents as a herdsman and fitter with Hereford breeders.

If you have walked back to the barns at any Standard of Perfection (SOP) Polled Hereford Show or National Hereford Show in the last 20 years, you probably found Don with a pair of clippers in his hand. Fitting and showing Hereford cattle has been more than his job; it has been his lifelong passion.

“Don is very particular and is a perfectionist,” says Kevin Schultz, Sandhill Farms, Haviland, Kan. “He takes a tremendous amount of pride in making the cattle look their best.”

Schultz has employed Don’s

talents the last three years helping prepare Sandhill Farms’ pen bulls at the NWSS. Two of the three years, 2006 and 2007, the Sandhill entries were named grand champion pen.

A Hereford start

Don got his start in the polled Hereford business in the late '70s when he purchased a heifer from Jim and Sue Rowland of G&R Polled Herefords, Marysville, Kan. With help and encouragement from Jim and Sue, he became involved in the polled Hereford breed and in 1981 attended his first Junior National Polled Hereford Show in Hutchinson, Kan. He was hooked on Herefords after he won his class.

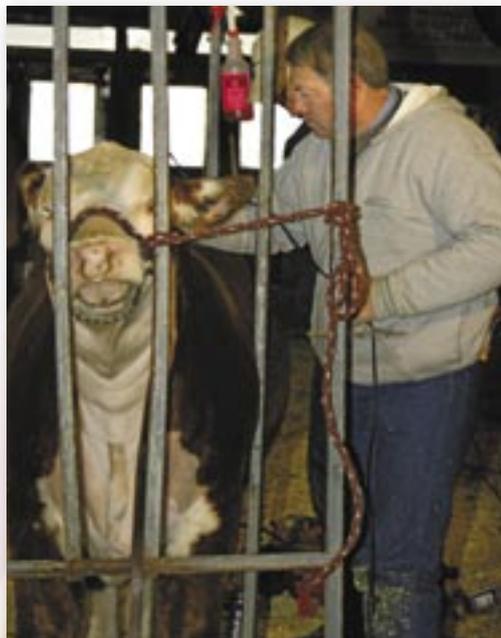
Growing up Don was a member of 4-H and FFA along with his siblings — Steve, Paul and Susan. Showing cattle was a family affair for the Yoesels, including Don’s parents, Clarence and Doris. Each Yoesel chose a different cattle breed to show. “I’m glad I chose polled Herefords,” Don says. “I have lots of good memories traveling with Nebraska and Kansas juniors along with Jim and Sue to national events.”

When Don’s junior career came to an end, he continued his involvement with the Hereford breed, building his own herd as well as helping other Hereford producers prepare their cattle for shows and sales.

The show road

Don’s career in the Hereford fitting business started in the late '80s working for Kevin Jensen of Jensen Fitting Service, Courtland, Kan. He spent many years on the show road with Jensen traveling to state fairs, SOP shows and National Hereford Shows.

“Don has been the most steady help I’ve had through the years,” Jensen says. “He led the other guys



Don Yoesel has spent numerous hours through the years with a pair of clippers in his hand. Kevin Jensen compliments Yoesel’s ability saying you rarely see a nick in one that Don has clipped.

in the crew not by 'bossing' but by leading by example."

Jensen continues complimenting Don's abilities saying, "Don is calm and he's extremely careful with a set of shears. He gets them all looking the same with rarely a nick in them."

Don credits his fitting techniques to the many fitters he's watched through the years. Early on in his career he spent hours watching others clip and fit. From those observations he developed his own style.

Don's love for Herefords and his talent as a fitter has taken him from the East to the West Coast and from Canada to Florida helping Hereford breeders prepare their cattle for exhibition and sale. His list of clients includes some of the Who's Who on the national Hereford show circuit — Jensen Bros., Colyer Herefords, Sandhill Farms, Tegtmeier Polled Herefords, Tennessee River Music Inc., JWR Land & Cattle Co., Blueberry Hill Farms, Grandview/CMR, plus many others.

A client and friend for many years, Russ Tegtmeier, Tegtmeier Polled Herefords, Burchard, Neb., says, "Don is very conscientious; he tends to his business and does his job extremely well. He always says the first impression is the most important. And you'll recognize this in his work habits and how he presents cattle."

Don has also gone to South America to prepare cattle for the showing. For the last four years, he has traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to help fit cattle at the Palermo All-Breeds Livestock Show for Hereford breeder Terre Garber.

Focusing on youth

Don has a heart for helping youth with their cattle projects. He has hosted several fitting and showmanship clinics for 4-H and FFA members. In the clinics he not only shares clipping and fitting techniques but also emphasizes nutrition and management strategies.

His message to youth has always been: "It takes dedication and hours of work to prepare your animal properly. Do your homework. Preparation starts months ahead with a proper feed ration, rinsing and brushing each day, getting your calf acquainted with you, your show halter and showstick," he says.

"You may not always win but you can always be a winner and know that you did your very best. Have fun. Listen to your peers and observe to learn," he says. "A good fitter has patience and is steady. It takes practice. It's not going to come overnight."

Advice from a pro

"In the cattle-fitting business, there are many needs and chores to do," Don says. "Sometimes it is challenging, but it is always rewarding."

Don says the reason he has done what he does for so long is because he likes the people. "As one travels you see old friends and make new ones, visit new interesting places, and get to see firsthand some top genetics and have the opportunity to consider how they might improve my Hereford herd," he says.

Don tends to be quiet but those who know him realize his quietness can be short-lived.



You only have one chance to make a first impression. Don is adamant about making sure the cattle look "perfect" before they walk in the ring and while on display. He says if you don't have the animal right the first time a judge or potential buyer looks at it you might not get a second chance to catch their eye.

"Don is a quiet person, and with this attribute, he is very observant and listens and learns about what is going on in the industry," Schultz says. "He is very knowledgeable about the business."

Don's resume of clients and his years in the business are proof of his dedication and commitment as a fitter and to the Hereford breed. "It's an honor to be selected by my fellow Hereford herdsman for this award," he says. "It's an achievement I'm proud to have won and it is very much appreciated." **HW**



Don's niece and nephews are now taking their turn in the showing. Don has taken time to help teach them the steps to a successful show career. Niece Amanda Lehmkuhl says this about Don, "He helped me, as well as others, in my younger showing years build confidence, learn good animal qualities and how to present my animal to my best ability. I appreciate my uncle Don's dedication to the cattle industry."