

On the Hill, In the Yards for the First Time

In January I experienced my first trip to Denver to attend the National Western Stock Show (NWSS). I had no idea what waited for me when I got off the plane except for maybe the below average temperatures.

If you've never been to Denver, I am sure that like myself you had heard many stories and descriptions about "the Hill" or "the Yards." Yet, I am sure that meant very little to you, as it did to me, because you can only imagine how one cattle show can be so different than the next.

Well I walked into Denver ready to discover everything I possibly could. Even though I was at the NWSS for eight days, I still didn't take in everything there was to see and encounter at the show.

My week started with a meeting on Monday morning with American Hereford Association (AHA) staff. We discussed the schedule for the week and I got more excited with every detail.

On Monday and Tuesday, we worked the Hereford check-in chutes.

It was great to see every quality Hereford walk through the chutes, but even more rewarding to see all of our great Hereford breeders leading their animals through. There were so many smiling faces and handshakes throughout those two days that I thought to myself

that this is why our breed is so successful. You truly saw that day after day in Denver, all Hereford exhibitors come together to get the job done.

At the herdsman dinner, Hereford enthusiasts joined together to share in fellowship and take a break from the cold air and hard work. The chili was delicious thanks to Randy Blin, Star Lake Cattle Ranch. The conversations were a buzz with the talk of whom the Hereford Herdsman of the Year might be and which calves looked likely to win the upcoming shows. While the snow was starting to blow outside, the breeders gathered on the bleachers and settled in for a great evening.

The Hereford hospitality suite was definitely the happening spot, if you are a fan of the whitefaces. The suite hosted hundreds of Hereford enthusiasts throughout the week.

The combination of breed information and cozy surroundings made the suite a place to gather and escape from the cold weather. The Hereford apparel store inside the suite was a great place to shop to show your Hereford loyalty, and my credit card revealed that by the end of the week! My new walking-to-class apparel includes sweatshirts, a vest, gloves, hats and even a thermos for the long walk.

Of course all my purchases include the AHA logo.

Once the show days finally arrived we started out with a great junior heifer show. Walt McKellar, Senatobia, Miss., did an excellent job of evaluating the high-quality heifers, as well as working with some great youngsters. Our juniors came through with a great show, admired by so many.

By noon the junior show was finished and the Hereford exhibitors headed to the Yards for the Hereford Carload and Pen Show. Talk about quality! The bulls were strong. Breeders sitting in the bleachers could be proud of what Herefords walked through the ring and the great job the judges did evaluating them. Throughout the shows Herefords received a lot of exposure. Hereford breeders watched, as well as producers from other breeds.

The week continued with the open female show. From the calves to the senior yearlings, the female show was as deep as any I have seen. Any Hereford enthusiast, in the barns or in the bleachers, should have been proud of the quality standing in the ring.

Saturday morning came early but was greatly anticipated as it was time to start the National Hereford Bull Show. Spectators watched with anticipation as bulls paraded through the ring with style and strength. It was great to have a front-row seat evaluating the bulls and picking out those that I would like to use in my herd. The audience filled the stands and you could see the Hereford pride on each face.

Now that I am back in semiwarm Kentucky I am filled with anticipation for July when I will be heading back to Denver for the 2007 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). Denver should be a lot warmer by that time. I hope to see those same bleachers filled with Hereford enthusiasts again. Until then. **HW**

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