



Mark Holt

As you look back on your childhood, some of the simplest activities you did as a youth made a lasting impression on your lifestyle. Mark Holt, American Hereford Association (AHA) field representative, started working on a family friend's beef and dairy operation at the age of 13. Little did he know the small job he had as a kid would give him the inkling to start a lifelong endeavor in agriculture. The previous experiences and jobs made Mark an ideal fit for the AHA field representative position when he started in December 2002.

Mark serves as the face of the Hereford breed in the Western region as he travels seven states. On a daily basis, Mark promotes Hereford cattle by working closely with breeders, assisting in marketing purebred and commercial cattle. Working as a liaison between the AHA and breeders, it is Mark's goal to communicate with members, informing them of new policy decisions made by the AHA Board of Directors.

Mark received his education from Washington State University (WSU). In 1993 he earned a bachelor's degree in animal science with a minor in agricultural economics. Later Mark went on to complete a degree in agriculture education in 1999. While attending WSU, Mark was an active college student, being part of the 1989-1991 livestock and meats judging teams. Mark values the skills he gained

in analyzing livestock and verbally justifying his decisions.

There are several people who influenced Mark when he was in college and establishing his career. To this day he looks up to Frank Rodgers for his continual motivation and desire to see Mark excel in his agricultural career. Mark says he admires Frank's work ethic and he strives to follow in his footsteps.

After Mark completed his degrees from WSU, he managed Venture Farms, located in Ellensburg, Wash., for five years. Mark oversaw two employees and managed 800 cows, 2,500 yearlings and the farm's artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET) programs.

After working there, Mark utilized his agriculture education degree and was an agriculture teacher at Lynden High School, Lynden, Wash. This was a very rewarding career for Mark. He says he inspired students to be the best they could be. Mark reached out to the kids who were not on track to attend college and taught them essential job-related skills. This position strengthened Mark's speaking skills, which he utilizes frequently while giving presentations to breeders.

During college Mark says he admired former Hereford fieldman Willard Wolf and thought he had the neatest job in the world. Willard traveled in the West, visiting many of the great registered and commercial ranches. When Willard retired, Mark decided to apply for his position.

Mark says what he enjoys most about his job is traveling and visiting ranches.

During Mark's time at AHA, he has developed numerous memories and friendships. One of his favorite memories was helping Babbitt Ranches in Arizona ship 43 loads of yearlings in three days to Ford County Feeders in Kansas. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and he frequently looks through the beautiful pictures of the ranch taken during his stay.

Mark enjoys catching up with old friends at shows and sales while making new friends along the way. Jim and Marcia Mickelson, Sonoma

Mountain Herefords, have welcomed him into their family with open arms at Hereford events. Jim and Marcia say they are fortunate to have Mark serving in their territory.

"We first met Mark when he was new to the AHA field staff, and we were in the process of expanding our own registered herd. Mark helped us to network with other breeders and assisted us in selecting cattle that would work with our program and in our area of the country. Mark's ability to work with the registered breeder, commercial cowman and the youth of our breed is a testament to his dedication to the Hereford breed."

Mark is proud of the improvements that he has witnessed while working at the AHA. "The Association is more streamlined with electronic registrations, *Hereford e-News* and the new updated Web site. We are also a stronger breed that will satisfy the need for whitefaced cattle."

He predicts the Hereford breed will continue to change during the next five to 10 years. "With the domination of one breed and continental breeds making themselves black, there is only one pure breed to use in a planned crossbreeding system," Mark says. "Commercial ranchers remember how good their black baldie calves and cows were and are aligning their herds to put Hereford genetics back in their pasture."

Mark and his wife, Staci, have been married 14 years and enjoy spending time with their daughter Hailey, who is 5 years old.

They recently moved to Emmett, Idaho. Their new location has five acres with a barn for horses or possibly future show cattle for Hailey. As a family they have the opportunity to spend time barrel racing, which Staci and Hailey compete in.

With a strong staff and devoted breeders, Mark says he is excited to see what the future brings for the Hereford breed. **HW**