



The Jones family of Darlington, Wis., say their six kids each do their part in preparations for cattle shows — both at home and on the road.

variety of school activities. Seely and Kendi have both been active in FFA, and Seely participated on the livestock judging team at Lincoln Land Community College for the past two years before transferring to the University of Illinois this year.

B.J. and Kim Jones, Darlington, Wis., are show parents to six children: Brett and Bailey, 17, Riley, 13, Lauren, 11, Brady, 5, and Nick, 3.

The Jones family's involvement in the Hereford industry began with B.J.'s 4-H project when he was 12. They've exhibited at every JNHE (Junior National Hereford Expo) since 2005, saying it's their family vacation — a trend among many show families.

"It's the one time we're gone for an extended period of time together," Kim says. "It's a lot of stress and a lot of work. But it's also the one time when the whole family has a singular goal of working together, focused on the same thing."

The four oldest Jones children are involved in many activities outside of showing, including hockey, cross country, soccer, dance, church youth group, forensics, theater, band, 4-H and FFA.

Among the many preparations for cattle show season is selecting cattle for each child. And each family has its own way of addressing the topic.

Who gets what?

The Jones family has 25 cows, and Kim and B.J. prefer their kids to show bred-and-owned cattle as much as possible.

"All of our cattle are owned by the four oldest kids," Kim says. "We have tried to instill the fact that when one wins, they all win."

Kim says she and B.J. try to match the showmanship skill level with the personalities of the cattle.

"If we have a heifer that can be a little trying at times, one of the bigger kids shows her," Kim explains. "And the younger calves

The Newbies

Every show parent has to begin somewhere. These experienced show parents offer advice to make that first year as painless as possible.

by **Christy Couch Lee**

My husband, Craig, and I had talked and dreamed about this moment for years — long before our three children even entered the picture: the moment we became "show parents."

Traveling to shows as a family. Working daily in our barn alongside our children, preparing our cattle for the ring while instilling the values of hard work, responsibility

and dedication that we valued so much from our childhood.

It all seemed so nostalgic. So simple. And then our oldest son, Waylon, turned 8 last year. And we purchased our first two Hereford heifers, Bella and Charlie. And reality set in.

Oh, it was wonderful. We couldn't have had a better first year. But, oh, the things we have had to learn.

Aside from the advice of my dad and brother, longtime cattlemen, our greatest help came from the advice of many experienced show parents from across the country. And these show parents have offered their advice to help other new show parents, too.

Tim and Tracie Sayre, Arenzville, Ill., have three daughters — Seely, 20; Kendi, 18; and Kira, 13. These girls are involved in numerous activities, in addition to having shown cattle for 13 years.

All three girls have been involved in numerous sports, 4-H and a



Tracie Sayre (left) says she and her husband, Tim, help their three daughters with their projects. But ultimately, the responsibility lies with the girls.

are usually shown by the younger kids, who can follow them through to yearlings.”

Tim also recommends registering cattle in all children’s names — especially those that can be shown as bred-and-owned.

“The best cows can then be shown by any of the kids,” he explains.

And how to decide who gets to show “the best” when skill level isn’t a factor? Tim recommends simply trying to make it even as much as possible.

“We try to split them up as best we can,” he says. “And sometimes, we let them make their own deals. One shows at one show, and then a different child shows her at another show.”

That idea of sharing is best transferred to the care of the animals, as well.

Siblings do their part

Tim and Tracie say responsibilities are divided evenly in their show barn — and every girl does every job.

“Kendi likes to wash, and Kira runs the blower,” Tracie says. “Seely does as much as she can when she’s home from college. But during the winter, with sports practices and games, we end up doing more of the work.”

Tim says the responsibility ultimately lies on the girls, though, regardless of the time of year.

“I’ve been showing since I was 8, so I don’t need the practice,” he says with a laugh. “We have always told them that we’d help them all they need, but we won’t do it for them.”

The Jones family assigns jobs for each child in the show barn, and those jobs follow through to shows, as well.

“Bailey is in charge of feeding; Lauren helps with rinsing; Brett is B.J.’s right-hand man, making sure every calf gets blown and brushed correctly; and Riley leads the cattle to and from the wash rack,” Kim says. “Everyone has a job, and they all know what’s expected. And when we get to the show, they jump in and do it.”

This all-for-one spirit is also helpful when balancing other activities with cattle responsibilities.

Balancing act

In the winter school comes first, Tim says. Seely was valedictorian of her class; Kendi is No. 1 in her class, and Kira is a straight-A student.

“I do more than they do because at that time, they don’t have a choice,” he says. “But in the summer, I don’t do much — they do it all.”

Kim says their solution to finding balance is to wake up early
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Tips from first-time show parents

Our 8-year-old son, Waylon, entered the ranks of NJHA (National Junior Hereford Association) membership last year — bringing my husband, Craig, and me into the role of first-time JNHE (Junior National Hereford Expo) show parents, too — an incredible experience, filled with many lessons for us all. Here are the greatest takeaways during my first year as a show mom.

- 1) Read the rules. Then read them again.
- 2) And then don’t be afraid to ask questions. I was determined that my husband and I would not ask those “dumb” questions. After all, I had worked for *Hereford World*, behind the scenes, at several JNHEs in the past. We should have this figured out! But my mission failed, and we sought answers from friends in the industry many times. “What shirt should he wear to opening ceremonies?” “Where do we find this entry form?” “How exactly does the meal plan work?” Not once were we made to feel dumb. In fact, everyone seemed truly happy to help. That’s the great thing about this Hereford family.
- 3) Get the Hereford app for your phone. You’ll get JNHE notices as events begin and helpful reminders throughout each day. It saved us more than once!
- 4) You can’t have enough wet wipes. Really, you can’t.
- 5) Don’t underestimate the value of a thank-you note. Sit down with your child, and help him or her write notes to show organizers, award sponsors and those who have helped throughout your year. Those notes are appreciated more than you may ever know. Plus, knowing how to write a thank-you note is a great skill for your child to learn.
- 6) Savor the experience. Take a few minutes to just soak it all in. Observe your kids laughing with their new friends. Remember the moment your child steps into that big showring for the first time. Put to memory the enormous grin on your child’s face as he exits the showring with the ribbon he’s worked so hard to earn — whether it’s blue or brown.

That really is the good stuff. And it’s better than I could have ever imagined. **HW**





Some families pack their trailers once for the entire show season, others divide and conquer for each show. It's really a matter of personal preference and what works best for your family.

Junior Hereford Association Program for Reaching Individuals Determined to Excel (PRIDE) Convention last summer, the others stepped up. We want the kids to have a well-rounded experience growing up. And we encourage them to be involved in many activities.”

Once the focus turns to preparing for a show, however, everyone jumps in to do their part.

Pack it up

Tim and Tracie say they pack their trailer once each summer, and it remains packed for the many shows they attend.

“Our show equipment goes into our trailer the first week of June, and we unload it in September,” Tim says.

The two oldest Sayre girls are now old enough to pack their own bags, Tracie says. And, they're each responsible for the small bag taken to the show stalls each day.

“They know what they need,” she says. “They bring a bag for any extras they need for that day — boots, belts, jeans — anything they need to wear for the show or for contests.”

Kim says the Jones family begins packing for a show about a week before they leave. They utilize a standard spreadsheet, developed through the years, to ensure they have everything and nothing is forgotten.

“The spreadsheet will calculate how many bags of feed we need, depending on the length of the show and number of cattle,” she says. “The spreadsheet also contains a laundry list of all items needed for the show box and trailer.”

and to be flexible and forgiving with various schedules.

“In the summer, when Brett is in football conditioning, the others fill in for him,” she says. “When the oldest two went to the National

The words of experience

Experienced National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) parents from across the country offer their best words of wisdom for new show parents.

Jodi McMillan, Tiskilwa, Ill.

NJHA national advisor with husband, Kyle. Mom to Lauren, 12.

“Make sure your kid has fun the first year. Yes, they do need to have responsibilities, but the most important thing is for them to have fun. If they don't have fun, they won't want to do it again.”

Sheila Jensen, Courtland, Kan.

Mom to current NJHA board member Brady, 21; current National Hereford Queen Brooke, 19; and Ben, 13.

“From the time we started showing, we have done this as a family. Everyone pitches in and helps. We do not believe in ‘this is mine and that is yours.’ Have them meet new friends every year. Brady met Cody Beck during his first years showing, and now they have gone to college together and have had many JNHE (Junior National Hereford Expo) memories together. We seem to get busier every year, but the time spent together brushing heifers will be lifelong memories. Showing livestock teaches responsibility and work ethic that is priceless.

“And encourage your children to get involved in many activities, such as speech

and team marketing. The confidence you build through speaking when you are young will stay with you forever.”

Chad Breeding, Miami, Texas

Dad to Austin, 14, and Blayke, 12.

“Always remember, they are kids. Don't expect too much, but never let them know you will accept anything less than their very best. And always be encouraging.”

Donna Curry, McAlester, Okla.

Mom to Staci, 23, and 2013 NJHA Herdsman of the Year Cameron, 21.

“When you're working at home with the kids, let the kids do it. As parents, we have a habit of taking the hose from them on the wash rack, if they're not doing it as we'd do it. Give them advice, then turn around and walk away. They won't learn if we are always trying to watch over their shoulders. Let them make their own mistakes, and let them learn from those mistakes.”

Sue Rowland, Marysville, Kan.

2011 JNHE chairman; Kansas Junior Hereford Advisor and aunt and “adopted aunt” to numerous Kansas Hereford youth.

“Ask questions. We assume you know, when you may not. There is no such thing as a ‘dumb’ question.

“In Kansas, we give the kids a deck of cards so that they'll mix. Maybe parents

should also pull up a lawn chair during those times to get to know other parents, too.

“We tell our Kansas kids to meet three new friends each day, and that should apply to parents, too. You may forget how your cattle placed in six months — maybe sooner. But you'll never forget the friendships made.”

Jan Adcock, Assumption, Ill.

Mom to past NJHA board chairman Tamar, 22; current NJHA board member Taryn, 19; and Del and Dean, 17.

“Remember, we are raising kids first and cattle second. We have to remind ourselves of this frequently, as we are a bit competitive! Show them, teach them and then let them do the work as much as possible; and accept that it may not be perfect. They will hopefully return the favor when the students surpass the teacher.

“Accept that siblings (or kids, in general) will have different talents and interests. Ours are all different, and each has found his or her ‘niche’ on the team.

“It's hard to watch them struggle and even fail. You want to swoop in and fix everything, but sometimes, the best thing you can do, as a parent, is absolutely nothing.

“And surround them with good mentors. You need all the help you can get raising them. Oh, boy. I cannot tell you the debt we

And, the same process applies for packing for the family of eight. But, no matter how organized you are, items sometimes are forgotten, Kim says.

"It's a good thing Walmart is usually close," she says with a smile. "One kid ended up without underwear at JNHE last year."

Tim says even the most experienced show parents forget the essentials from time to time.

"We seem to buy a lot of comb holders at the shows, as we always seem to lose those," he says with a laugh. "And we had to buy feed at the JNHE last year, too."

For a family with small children, Kim says, a wagon is essential. It's a way to transport kids and items during the show, as well as a place for much-needed naps.

"We forgot it for the Illinois preview show this year, and it was

difficult," she says.

Tim says, before you leave home, it's critical to ensure the papers match the cattle and their tattoos.

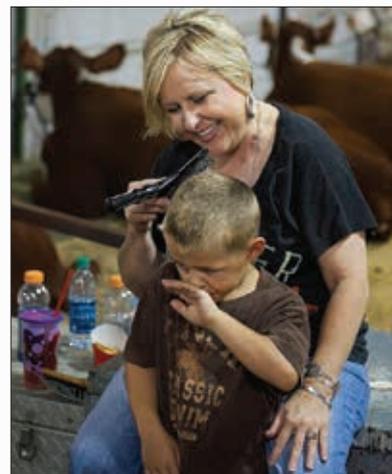
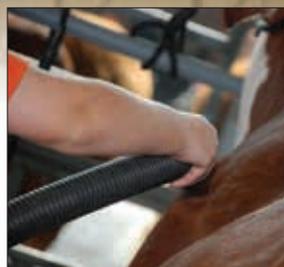
"We've forgotten to check the health papers before going to a show, only to discover the tattoos didn't match the papers when we got there," he says.

Meals are also an essential part of a show week with the family.

Time to eat

Tracie says determining meals takes some planning.

"Illinois usually offers three meals during JNHE," she says. "For other meals, we bring our camper and our slow cooker."



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owe to the many families who have been rock-solid examples for our kids."

Debbie Bacon, Siloam Springs, Ark.

Mom to former NJHA board member and former National Hereford Queen Cassie, 26; former NJHA board member Justin, 22; and former National Hereford Queen and current NJHA board member Amanda, 19.

"When we started showing, the exhibitor in last place of each JNHE class of 20 or more head was presented a 'chin-up' award. When we had all three kids showing for the first time, we came home with three of them. They were so discouraged. I asked them if they had fun, and if they liked their heifers, and they said they did.

"It's important to help them realize that they're building a project. Help them focus on the progress they've made. And above all, they need to take pride in what they've accomplished – regardless of what happens in the showinging."

Lisa Moser, Westmoreland, Kan.

Mom to Justin, 16; Ryan, 13; and Allison, 9.

"When deciding on a hotel for a week-long cattle show, on-site laundry facilities are a must.

"Always carry a fully stocked first-aid kit, snack box and drink cooler to keep everyone well cared for on those long show days.

"Encourage your kids to get involved beyond the showing. The life skills developed through contest participation and leadership service will carry them well into the future.

"Most importantly, treasure the long days, short nights and times in the truck. You are making memories that will last a lifetime."

Don Mulvaney, Auburn, Ala.

Dad to former NJHA board member Katlin, 26; Cameron, 24; and Chandler, 20.

"Attend shows and visit with successful families before you make your first purchase. Make sure your family is on-board with the commitment of financial resources and dedication to preparing your projects for the show. An average effort often leads to disappointment and perhaps unknowingly, exhibition of an animal not reflective of the quality of Hereford cattle available today.

"Purchase a show project from an operation or family that is willing to mentor, advise and help your children through those early show experiences. Buying a calf from an auction may not come with that follow-up support.

"Find a family that is doing well, appears to have their act together and engage them about their pre-show check list, their feeding programs, their ways of working

hair and showmanship tips. We have helped a number of families get jump started over the years.

"While everyone wants to 'win' right off, our own experience affirms the value in purchasing a top-quality animal, but not necessarily the candidate for champion the first year, simply because the youth may not have the showmanship skill readiness to prepare and exhibit an exceptional animal to its full potential. Once a youth has gained experience, they can purchase that heifer that will be in the hunt for champion honors.

"Once the youth has some experience and is motivated, invest in some lessons from a skilled showman. All three of our children showed Hereford cattle and looking back, we followed the above path. Our oldest and youngest maintained an intrinsic passion for the breed and showing, which enabled Chandler to gain from the experiences, mistakes and successes of Katlin. In turn, both have a caring concern and passion to help others by developing and mentoring several Hereford youth.

"Lastly, keep things in perspective. We really weren't showing cattle, but rather raising future adults. We couldn't have done it without the Hereford experiences." **HW**



Tracie says her specialties are taco soup and chicken alfredo, made with a box meal for the oven that also prepares nicely in the slow cooker. And, she says, ham sandwiches and salads are staples at the shows.

Tim says preparing their own food helps in many ways.

“The worst experience at the shows is the fair food,” he says. “It’s expensive to buy, and you start to feel bad, the more you eat it.”

Kim says Wisconsin junior families divide JNHE meal preparation by day — each family being responsible for feeding the group of 30-50 for every meal one day of the week.

“Everyone gets fed, and we don’t have to worry as much,” she says.

Kim’s go-to recipe for shows is meatball subs. Simply throw frozen meatballs and spaghetti sauce into a slow cooker, and your meal is practically made, she says.

For dining on the road, the oldest children also prepare ham sandwiches for each family member to eat during the drive or during stall setup upon arrival. And a pan of Rice Krispies® treats and a watermelon are also Jones family staples.



No matter how much the family enjoys cattle shows, additional entertainment is a necessity, as well.

Keep them happy

The Sayres say electronics have always been a staple for travel entertainment.

“Even before portable TVs were made for vehicles, we’d take TVs in the trucks with us,” Tracie says. “Now, they all have Nintendo DSes and DVD players.”

The Jones family also says electronics are a “must” for family trips.

“We typically drive late at night, after we get finished with work, so the kids also sleep a lot,” Kim says. “But we also rely on electronics. It’s hard to say it, but we do.”

Kim says managing small children at a show can sometimes be interesting. Her advice is to let them help as much as possible — filling buckets or brushing heifers.

And, she says, Hereford families become extended family at shows.

“At the shows, we are so blessed with wonderful friends — we’re like a family,” Kim says. “We are enough of a circus with six kids, and other families watch out for our kids and know where our little ones belong if they stray from the stalls.”

No matter how prepared you may be, show day can be stressful. But being prepared can help things flow more smoothly.

Surviving show day

Tracie says the key to surviving show day is calmness.

“Stay calm,” she says. “The calmer you are, the calmer the kids will be.”

And one way to ensure calmness is to allow plenty of time for feeding, washing and fitting, Tim says.

“It’s always better to have too much time than not enough,” he says. “There’s nothing worse than being rushed.”

Kim says patience is essential for show day survival.

“By that point, the kids are tired and you’re tired, and we do our best to remember that,” she says. “We try to work together and keep it in perspective.”

Sometimes, she admits, remembering the big picture can be challenging.

“It’s sometimes hard to watch them show when they’re little — wincing when a foot is way too far back, or if they’re not watching the judge,” Kim says. “But those truly are some of the best years, too. They’re so cute when they’re working so hard at it. And the memories you’re making as a family are much more important.”

And when the show is complete, involving the entire family in loading up the trailer can help that process go smoothly, as well, Kim says.

“Even the little kids can carry the bag of feed that’s almost empty, or they can move the plastic pitchfork to the trailer,” Kim says. “One, you know where they are. And two, they feel like they’re a part of it, too.”

Above all

Of the many lessons he’s learned through the years, Tim says his top advice for a first-time show parent is to ensure the cattle are as gentle as possible.

“If your kids have a bad experience the first time, they may not want to do it again — even if they’re really interested,” he says. “If they get stepped on or kicked, that could be the end. But with tame cattle, and with Herefords, that experience can be the best. Make sure it’s nice and smooth.”

Kim says her best piece of advice is to enjoy the time with your family.

“It goes by so fast,” she says. “It’s not so much about what they do in the showring, as it is what you are teaching your kids. Respect and hard work. The value of friends and working together. You’ll likely stand at both ends of the lineup at JNHE, and every show, for that matter. You don’t really remember those years you’re on the wrong end. But you do remember being together for a week, working together for a goal. And you hope your kids remember they’ve been able to work at something and be successful at it.”

No truer words have been spoken. The first year as a show parent is filled with lessons, laughs and memories to be cherished forever.

There’s truly nothing like it. **HW**