

Kelley Honored as Hereford Herdsman of the Year



Mark Kelley, Ennis, Texas, was selected the 2008 Hereford Herdsman of the Year at the National Western Stock Show in Denver. Mark was selected for the award by his peers — other Hereford herdsman — and honored prior to the selection of the champion polled Hereford bull Jan. 19.

Mark grew up showing cattle in Texas and on the national level. He showed his first Hereford at the age of 4. His family started Rainbow Cattle Services in 1985. Mark has devoted most of his life to helping with the family fitting business.

He has exhibited cattle across the U.S. and Canada and has fitted numerous champions including national champions at Denver, Kansas City, Louisville and Fort Worth.

“There’s nothing like getting a heifer calf in the barn and then feeding and working with her and watching her grow into a champion,” Mark says. “It’s like they become family.”

Paul Day, a Hereford breeder and one of Mark’s clients from Waxahachie, Texas, says, “Mark is respected throughout the show cattle industry as one of the most talented, hardest working, most dedicated individuals in the barns, yet he always takes time to help others. Mark also takes great pleasure in helping younger exhibitors. He will gladly share his knowledge and experience with anyone who asks.”

Mark says cattle people are what he enjoys the most about what he

does. “I don’t know of anything else you can do and be around the class of people that you are in this business and be accepted for who you are and what you do,” Mark says. “The people in this business accept each other no matter how much money you have or how long you’ve been in the business.”

He admits he’s had a lot of mentors through the years, but on the top of the list is his dad, Ted. “I learned so much from him,” Mark says. “I consider him to be the best at feeding cattle and the best cowman I’ve ever known.”

“The No. 1 thing Dad taught me was, if you are going to do something you might as well do it right. No reason to ‘half-way’ anything. And never compromise honesty and integrity.”

After his Dad died in 2001, Mark and his family continued the family fitting business. Mark’s mother, Ethel, says she is proud of her three children and was blessed to raise them in the cattle business. Mark’s brother, Dan, works for Express Ranches. Their sister, Robyn Samsel, says she’s enjoyed working with Mark the last 15 years. “Mark has taught me you can never stop learning,” she says.

Paul says what makes Mark so good as a herdsman is that he loves what he does. “He has a God-given talent to feed and fit cattle,” Paul explains. “He enjoys doing it; it’s not just a job to him.”

“I trust Mark, not only with my cattle, but I also feel comfortable when I send Kirbie with him to a show. He does a better job telling her what she needs to do than I do,” Paul adds.

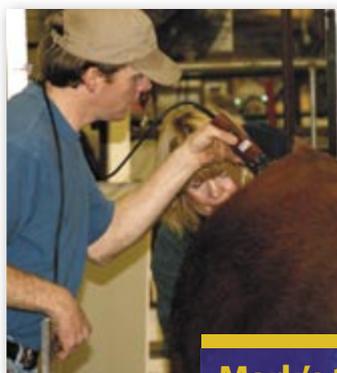
Paul’s daughter, Kirbie, says Mark has been her mentor in the cattle business. “Mark and Robyn have taught me how to show as well as how to care for my cattle,” she says. “I learn so much from just watching Mark

work. He takes his job very seriously, but he also knows how to make hard work more fun.”

Mark’s lists of clients and accomplishments are proof of his dedication and success as a fitter and herdsman. Those who have worked with him say he’s not one to take the credit for the success of the cattle he works on. “I’d rather not be the focus of attention,” Mark says. “There are so many people who help, from loading the trailer to helping get the cattle ready. All of those individuals also deserve recognition.”

He adds, “I’m so humbled. This is an amazing honor because of the people who have been honored before me.”

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Mark’s tips

2008 Hereford Herdsman of the Year Mark Kelley shares these tips on how to be a good herdsman:

1. Be honest with yourself about your own cattle. They may not be as great as you think they are. If you recognize their faults, you’ll do a better job getting them ready.
2. Keep it simple. There is no need to do something that a calf does not need. For example, some breeds and shows have banned the use of paint and powder.
3. Surround yourself with good people. At the end of the day, ask the people you work with what they thought; constructive criticism is the only way to get better.
4. Watch others. Take time to watch what others are doing and always be open to learn new ideas.
5. With determination and hard work, you can be successful. HW