

Focused

Kenneth and Elaine Bonnette have set and accomplished showing goals for more than 20 years.

by *Sara Gugelmeyer*

When Kenneth and Elaine Bonnette were married in 1957, they left the family farm behind for the construction business but vowed that someday they would have cows again. That day came in 1979 when

they purchased land at Belmont, N.H., and started Oak Ledge Farm. They chose polled Hereford cows and never looked back.

Now, Oak Ledge Farm is well known for its top quality Hereford show cattle, and Kenneth and Elaine donate much of their time to promoting the Hereford breed in New England through the New England Hereford Association (NEHA).

“We purchased our first two cow-calf pairs at the NEHA sale in 1981 in Guilford, Vt.,” says Elaine. “We showed at local fairs from 1983-1998 and the national shows starting in 1992 and are still going.”

The focus at Oak Ledge Farm is producing the highest quality show cattle possible. With only 21 head on their farm, Elaine says, they usually have between eight and 10 in the national show string each year. “We AI (artificially inseminate) 100% of our cattle and use embryo transfer,” Elaine says.

Oak Ledge Farm sells show cattle and prospects to buyers all over the country. The farm’s focus on showing has earned

Kenneth and Elaine many showing titles. They say their greatest accomplishment was when their favorite heifer, KEB Kameo Keynote 20 XH, was awarded the American Hereford Association’s (AHA) Northeast Region Show Heifer of the Year title in 2000. “Her disposition, and care as a mother, make her just a great animal,” Elaine says.

One of her calves, KEB Olivia Online 122LP, is following in Kameo’s footsteps. She has been shown in the cow-calf division 12 times with 12 wins. Producing this type of cattle has earned the Bonnettes the premier exhibitor award for the Northeast region the past five years.

Kenneth and Elaine say they couldn’t have done it without the help of Keystone Cattle Service, which has handled their show string since 1996.

Despite the Bonnettes’ busy show schedule, they still find time to serve on the board of directors for the NEHA. Elaine is currently the treasurer of that organization. This year, the NEHA dedicated

its 69th annual spring sale to the Bonnettes for their service to the group. The NEHA honored Kenneth and Elaine in its catalog by writing, “The NEHA Board of Directors would like to thank the contributions and the unwavering support that Kenneth and Elaine Bonnette have provided this association. They continue to offer



The NEHA honored Kenneth and Elaine Bonnette at its 2009 spring sale for their contribution to the organization.

Showing is the Bonnettes’ focus. KEB Olivia Online 122 LP (pictured here with her calf) has won the cow-calf division every time she’s competed.



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their time and wisdom to our association and its members through times of struggle as well as times of celebration. Our farms, our members and our New England communities are better because of their involvement within our association.”

For the Bonnettes, they say the

time spent serving the NEHA by donating their time and resources to the association and especially to the youth of the organization is well worth it. “It’s the younger people that are going to keep the organization going, so we try to promote the youth as much as possible,” Elaine says. “We’re

very proud of being involved with the AHA, and we hope it keeps growing.”

She adds, “The people we’ve met and the friends we’ve made over the years make it more than worthwhile; it’s just so great that the AHA has the camaraderie it does. We hope to do it for many more years.” **HW**