

Dedication

Dan Moser has spent a lifetime involved with the Hereford breed.

by Sara Gugelmeyer



For Dan Moser showing cattle and being involved in Hereford activities as a youth was more than just a hobby; it helped shape his life into what it is today. And now he's involved in the American Hereford Association (AHA) in more ways than one.

Dan started out showing an Angus 4-H heifer, but his cousins, Bryce and Lori Schumann, were active in junior polled Hereford shows, and it wasn't long before Dan and his sister, Kristi, were loading up and hauling with them. Dan says, "We went with them and started showing Hereford steers first at the state level and then continued on and started showing some of the heifers that they bred."

Dan's cousin Lori served on the National Junior Polled Hereford

Council, and Dan did the same from 1986-1988. He was the chairman of the council from 1987-1988 and says he gained valuable experience from that time. "It pushed me to do things I wasn't comfortable doing, like public speaking, but it was one of those things that I just had to do," he says.

Dan earned more valuable experience when his chairman duties took him to Manitoba, Canada. "One of the most meaningful experiences was when I went to the Canadian Junior Bonanza to represent the U.S. polled association," Dan says. "I did a lot of speaking and being involved in the opening ceremonies and that made a big impression on me."

Dan chose to pursue a bachelor's degree at Kansas State University (K-State) in animal science, although at that time he wasn't exactly sure what would be his career path.

"I'd always had an interest in being around purebred cattle, seedstock, and at the same time, math was something that I always enjoyed even way back in middle school and high school. So when I took the animal breeding class at K-State as an undergrad, that was something that really clicked and put together a lot of my interests and was something that I really enjoyed."

He now had a plan. "At that time my goal was to work for a breed association to do something kind of like what Jack Ward would do for AHA," he says.

He turned to one of his polled Hereford mentors, Jim Gibb, for advice. "At that time Dr. Jim Gibb worked for APHA (American Polled Hereford Association). He did

performance programs and was also the advisor for the junior council, so he was pretty influential about encouraging me to look at graduate school in animal breeding."

And so Dan did. He graduated from K-State in 1991 and headed to the University of Georgia to work toward a master's degree in genetics. Also that year he met his future wife, Lisa Hawkins.

He and Lisa were introduced at the wedding of mutual friends and quickly discovered they had a lot in common.

Lisa explains, "While we never met, our paths had crossed many times in our childhood. Dan and I both showed in the national junior Angus showmanship contest when we were 15. We both placed second in the National Angus Auxiliary Scholarship Contest (I was the second-place girl and he was the second-place boy). We both judged livestock the same year in college. And we both served on national junior boards."

However, the timing of their meeting was not ideal. Dan was going to school in Georgia, and Lisa, after having graduated from Michigan State University, was working for the Kansas Livestock Association. But, by the time they started dating the following year, Lisa was working for the AHA as the director of communications and associate editor of the *American Hereford Journal*.

Despite the long distance, they continued the relationship and were married in November 1994. Lisa moved to Georgia so Dan could stay and earn his doctorate in beef cattle genetics.

Again, his Hereford roots would show. "In those days Georgia was

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conducting both the AHA and APHA analyses and was involved in the international analysis, putting AHA and APHA and the Canadian analyses together into one,” Dan says. “I wasn’t directly involved in that, but I was around it a lot and was part of the conversation.”

Also, as a graduate student, Dan put the public speaking skills he learned in his youth to work, as he began teaching classes. He says, “When I first went to grad school, teaching wasn’t something that occurred to me. But as I got involved in teaching, I found that I really enjoyed it. So by the time I was looking for a permanent faculty position, teaching was definitely a high priority, and I wanted a significant amount of my time spent working with students.”

In 1997 Dan finished his doctorate in beef cattle genetics and found his first position at the University of Nebraska in the animal science department. “I think I always knew I wanted to come back to the Midwest,” Dan says.

He adds that he really enjoyed his time at Nebraska, but it wasn’t his ideal job. “It wasn’t an animal breeding and genetics position; it was teaching introductory animal science and coaching the livestock judging team. So when a position at my alma mater opened where I would get to teach genetics and animal breeding, that was pretty hard to turn down.”

And so the Moser family, which now included 1-year-old son Justin, moved to Kansas in 1999, and Dan began work at K-State.

His 50% teaching, 50% research appointment fits his interests and strengths well. He teaches and advises undergraduate and graduate students in the subjects of genetics and animal breeding.

He also conducts genetics-related research with graduate students and the other genetics faculty member, Jennifer Bormann.

Just recently he added to his list of responsibilities by becoming the faculty coordinator for the K-State Purebred Beef Teaching Unit.

At the purebred unit, Ryan Breiner is the herdsman, but Dan oversees his work on budgets and has some input on the breeding program. “Ryan Breiner as a herdsman is extraordinary,” Dan says. “I’m lucky to have a herdsman at the beef barn that is talented, focused and puts his heart and soul into improving the cattle and improving the facilities.”

The purebred unit raises three breeds of cattle: Hereford, Angus

and Simmental. “It’s historically been a big Angus operation with Simmentals and Herefords also,” Dan says. There are about 250 females, with about half being Angus and about 40 Hereford cows and replacement heifers. “We are definitely working on building up the numbers on the Hereford side,” Dan says. “Two of the last three years, Herefords have been our high-selling breed in the bull sale.”

An annual bull sale is the university’s means of marketing. Undergraduate students have the opportunity to help organize and work the sale with faculty guidance. He says, “It’s enjoyable to work with our customers and teach our students about livestock marketing.”

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Dan says their cattle are a family project. Lisa and Dan are pictured with their children (l to r) Allison, Ryan and Justin.



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Dan is also active in genetic research projects, one of which is in cooperation with the AHA. “We are working right now on a heifer calving rate EPD (expected progeny difference),” Dan says. He will give a report to the membership during the 2009 annual meeting breeder forums.

Another research topic that Dan and the department spend a lot of time on is feed intake. “This year we measured individual feed intake on all the bulls in the sale, and we are looking at the genetics of feed intake and feed efficiency,” Dan says. “We also have a herd of commercial cows where we are selecting Angus bulls that have Australian feed efficiency EPDs, and we are going to keep the daughters out of those high efficiency and low efficiency bulls and see the differences in cow production efficiency, longevity and reproduction.”

Dan also works as a consulting geneticist to the AHA on performance matters as needed. “I’ve done that for several years to help the staff and the Board when they need technical expertise on things like genetic evaluation,” he says.

Dan says he hopes it’s a mutually beneficial relationship. “Hopefully it’s been beneficial to AHA because they have access to somebody with more technical training when they need it. They obviously don’t need my input daily, but I am here when issues arise,” Dan says. “Through this I also have real world examples of industry issues that I can share in the classroom. And it also helps identify priorities for my research.”

One example of what Dan does for the Association is to help with the genetic evaluation process. Although the AHA employs ABRI in Australia for genetic evaluation services, Dan reviews the research reports for Association staff and

the Board. “When those reports come back from Australia, I study them to make sure that everything looks right, that the values are in normal ranges and the way they’ve analyzed the data looks appropriate. I am making sure that the decisions they’ve made about the way they model the traits and the way they conduct evaluations is in the best interest of the breeders and the Association.”

Dan also serves as a resource to Hereford breeders with questions or concerns about breeding decisions and selection from a geneticist’s point of view. He has spoken about these topics at various Hereford and industry events including a Hereford 101 online Webinar.

Dan says it’s rewarding for him to be able to give back to the Association for the benefits he reaped as a junior member. “Perhaps this is one way I can return a portion of the investment that the breeders make to the junior program,” Dan says. “It is humbling to have accomplished breeders ask me technical questions and want my input.”

Besides Dan’s relationship with the AHA as a professional, he is also the proud father of National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members. He and Lisa have three children, Justin, 11; Ryan, 8; and Allison, 4. Justin has been competing at the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) for the last two years, and Ryan will make his JNHE debut this year in Tulsa, Okla.

The desire to encourage their children to be involved in cattle projects stems back to Dan’s and Lisa’s childhoods. “All those common bonds led us to this desire to raise our children with a similar upbringing to what we had as kids. Those experiences really shaped both our lives,” Lisa says.

To begin with, Dan and Lisa weighed the opportunities of the junior breed organizations and settled on Hereford. “We wanted to focus our time and energy on one breed and determine the best

place for us,” Dan says. “Definitely the disposition of Herefords was the first thing in terms of them being kid-friendly. And honestly, the other thing was that Lisa and I both see, in this area and nationally, just more opportunity with Hereford cattle. I like the direction of the Hereford breed.”

Helping the next generation get involved in the cattle business was a joint effort from the Moser and Hawkins families. Lisa’s parents, David and Kathleen Hawkins, purchased semen from a Michigan State-owned bull to give to the Moser children. Dan’s parents, Lowell and Mary Jane, offered their small polled Hereford herd for the children to use for their projects.

Now, the kids have settled in to the NJHA. In 2007 Justin won the National Organization of Poll-ettes heifer drawing. He picked out a heifer donated by Rick McKown in honor of Luther Munsinger and returned to the 2008 JNHE to show her. He has been involved in many contests and activities at the JNHE and at the state and regional levels.

The children also help make the decisions made for the family’s cow herd. The Mosers have a small herd of about 30 Hereford and Angus cows that spend most of their time at Dan’s parents’ place, where Dan grew up in Effingham, Kan. Dan’s father, Lowell, looks after them, but all matings and management decisions are a family effort. Some of the heifers are calved out at Dan and Lisa’s home at Westmoreland, Kan., and all of the potential show heifers are kept there for the kids to work with.

The cattle are really a family endeavor. Dan stresses that he appreciates cattle showing because it brings the whole family together at one event. “I see my community friends and their kids who are very involved in sports, and on the same weekend, they may have their children at different events in various towns. So mom’s at a soccer tournament for this age with this team in one town and dad’s with another child going the other direction to a separate event,” Dan says. “One

of the nice things about livestock projects is that all ages go to the same event and participate together.”

Also for the Mosers, their extended family is involved. Lisa’s parents live in Michigan but are still involved in the cattle business and come to as many shows as they can. Dan’s parents have been to every show the boys have ever competed in, and many times Dan’s sister, Kristi, comes to help as well. “It’s something that we did together, and I guess I appreciate that more now that I am a parent,” Dan says.

Both Lisa and Dan find it rewarding to see their children participating in something that they found so much value in themselves. Dan says, “The experiences that I had as a junior Hereford member and being involved in those activities had a big impact on me as a young person, and I enjoyed it immensely, and I continue to enjoy it now as a parent.” **HW**