

Roots Run Deep

Roger and Patrick Morgan have come from the rugged Nebraska Sandhills to claim their place in JNHE history.

by *Melissa Leander*



The Morgan family — Kay, Roger, Patrick and Ronny — share in Roger and Patrick's success at the 2006 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). The boys won nearly \$5,500 in scholarship money.

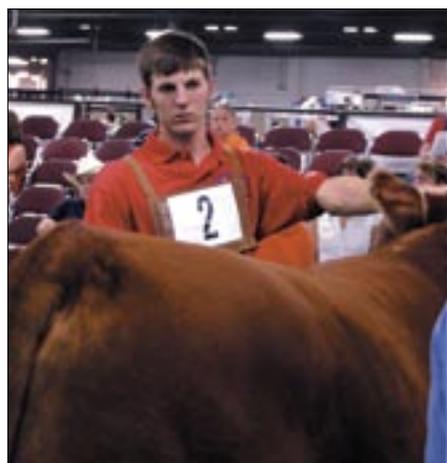
Just like an old cottonwood tree, the Morgan family roots run deep in Nebraska's ranching community. The family has secured its spot in Hereford history. Roger and Patrick Morgan, Burwell, Neb., have grown up watching their parents and other relatives succeed in the Hereford business, but at the 2006 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), it was their turn to shine in the spotlight. The twins were recognized for their hard work and dedication to the breed with numerous awards and scholarships.

A JNHE to remember

Roger and Patrick Morgan claimed history with the number of scholarships and awards they won at the JNHE this year in Louisville, Ky. Roger and Patrick both received the prestigious John Wayne Memorial Scholarship; Patrick received the second-place National Junior Merit Award; Roger received first place in the Walter and Joe Lewis Memorial Scholarship and Patrick received second place; Patrick received the National Organization of Poll-ettes Founders Scholarship; Patrick received the Sue Coley Memorial Scholarship; and Roger received the Hereford Herdsman Scholarship.

Not only did they win scholarships and awards, but they both exhibited cattle and took part in showmanship. Roger was also elected to serve a three-year term on the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors.

The Morgan twins want to make sure, though, that people know they wouldn't be where they are today if it weren't for their family, a family who spends vacations at the JNHE. Ronny and Kay Morgan, the twins' parents, were in Louisville with the boys helping them throughout the week.



The twins not only won numerous scholarships at the JNHE, but also demonstrated their showring capabilities in the senior showmanship contest.



Building a way of life

The twins believe it's their family's commitment to and longevity in ranching that has determined their success in the Hereford business.

The Morgan Ranch was started by Alex and Ollie Morgan in the 1930s as a yearling operation. When Ronny's parents, Dan and Doris, moved from New Mexico to the ranch in 1956, the family incorporated the Hereford breed into their yearling herd. Today's operation includes a few helping hands with Ronny's mother, Doris; brother, Danny; sister, Jeanne; wife, Kay; and their children, John, Carrie and the twins, all helping on the ranch.

“We love living where we do,” says Ronny. “This place isn’t the easiest to make a living off of, but we make it work.”

Those who know the Morgan family recognize this dedication and character.

“The Morgan family enjoys the challenges and good life offered by the ranching way of life,” says Kevin Brown, Roger and Patrick’s high school English teacher. “They are committed to improving and growing with the cattle industry and helping make their community the same.”

Showtime success

Ronny and Kay (and their siblings) all showed Herefords. Now their children have taken a liking to the Hereford showing. John, Carrie, Roger and Patrick all showed in 4-H and at the All-American Junior Hereford Expo or Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). John had the champion Hereford steer at the expo in 1993, and Carrie had the reserve champion steer in 1996. The Morgan family also has had a great run at the Nebraska State Fair with 10 consecutive champion Hereford 4-H heifers. Roger and Patrick showed six of the 10.

“We’ve exhibited cattle since we were old enough to hold a show stick,” Patrick says. “We exhibit at every JNHE, state fair and county fair, and needless to say, it is Herefords that we stick with.”

The Morgan Ranch might be most noted in Nebraska country for its show steers that the family began selling in 1967. Morgans have been recognized at the National Western Stock Show in Denver for being the longest consecutive exhibitor of feeder calves, 33 years.

Ronny and Kay met while showing at the Nebraska State Fair in 1965, where Ronny had the champion Hereford steer and Kay had the champion Hereford heifer. Three years later, Ronny had the champion Angus steer and Kay had the champion Shorthorn steer at the state fair. The Morgan family has since remained in the showing.

“The Morgan family is successful but in a quiet way. They get their work done and are always the most welcoming people,” says Clara Crays, Nebraska Junior Hereford Association member.

Other endeavors

Just as the Morgans are leaders in the showing, they are leaders in the Hereford breed and their community.

Ronny and Kay work for Gumb Auction and Realty. They served on the Nebraska Hereford Association board of directors for many years, sharing the job of secretary/manager from 1978-1989. In 1995 Kay reassumed the job of secretary/manager and then retired in 2005. Kay is a member of the American Hereford Women (AHW) and was president in 2004. She also helps



The Morgan family is known for its top-quality steers. Roger won the reserve grand champion steer at the 2004 JNHE in Tunica, Miss.

out the AHW and National Organization of Poll-ettes by producing their combined newsletter.

All four Morgan children graduated at the top of their class at Loup County High School in Taylor, Neb. Carrie was a two-term president of the Nebraska Junior Hereford Association. The twins have also served on the board of directors — Roger as second vice president and Patrick as president, secretary and treasurer. Roger also was named third-place international youth judge at the World Hereford Conference in Armidale, Australia, in 2006. Many 4-H, FFA and community activities and awards are also under Morgan belts.

Roger is a sophomore at Northeast Community College in Norfolk, Neb., where he is studying general agriculture in hopes of going to a four-year university to finish his degree in range management or wildlife and fisheries. He is a member of the livestock judging team and works at Blueberry Hill Farms.

Patrick is a sophomore at Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, Curtis, where he is studying livestock management and is a member of the horse and livestock judging teams. He also works on the college farm.

“My future is being part of our ranch and raising Hereford cattle,” says Patrick. “I like being able to be my own boss, relaxing a little and having control of our product.”

Roger agrees, “I would love to return to the ranch and that way of life, but that will depend on how many people are trying to make a living off of here.”

Back on the ranch

The Morgan family is also noted for utilizing progressive breeding and marketing strategies.

The family manages about 300 commercial Hereford females,

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The family works to develop a product consumers both want and demand through marketing and breeding strategies.





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300 yearlings and 100 head in a finishing lot. Morgans are also involved in a partnership with relatives in California involving 120 Wagyu cattle.

“We look for herd sires that have low birth weights and are structurally sound,” says Ronny. “We don’t follow any trends; we find what works for us.”

Their herd is source verified and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) certified Non-Hormone Treated Cattle (NHTC). The family artificially inseminates (AI) about half of their females. Their feedlot cattle are backgrounded first at the ranch for 30 days and then fed out at the Burnham Feedlot near Burwell before being sold to markets wanting NHTC. The family is getting ready to export some of their Herefords to Europe and Japan.

As for the Wagyu cattle, the Morgan Ranch is currently one in only seven cattle producers in America to be certified to export its product to Europe. The Wagyu cattle specifications include being natural, treated in humane conditions and raised without hormones or animal by-products.

The Morgan Ranch marketing strategy is simple: be accountable for the cattle. “All our cattle can be traced from the package it’s in to the place it was raised on our ranch,” says Ronny. “Traceability is really important now; at least that’s what the consumer says.”

It’s not over yet

Just as an old cottonwood stands the test of time, so will the Morgan Ranch. As the twins hope to pursue a life on the ranch, the Morgan family hopes to stay for years to come.

We’ve had a work in progress for 70 years, and we’ll keep being here for that many more, Ronny, Patrick and Roger agree.

With that hope to stay, family members encourage each other during rough and happy times. The twins sit back in their chairs in awe of everything their family has accomplished to lead up to their success at this year’s JNHE.

“This is a great family activity,” says Kay. “We’re a close-knit family, and we pull for each other.” **HW**