

Generation Y Is Equipped for the Future



Craig Huffhines

Does the next generation of young Hereford breeders have the mental toughness, skill sets, desire and passion for the business to make it in the beef cattle industry? That was a question that came to mind as I spent a full week in July at the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Tulsa, Okla.

The generation I'm referring to is what sociologists refer to as Generation Y — those kids born between about 1986 and 2000, also known as millennium kids.

We call them our Hereford youth members and there are about 2,200 of them within our organization. This generation has grown up in a much different world than the one that I grew up in. They are computer and technology savvy. They all carry cell phones. Most carry iPods with computer downloads of their favorite music they can listen to at any time, and they have an insatiable appetite for networking with others.

In fact, everyone that they come across who

has a similar interest can immediately be plugged into their network where communication is as fast as they can type on their cell phones. They prefer texting versus talking because it saves time, and yes, they do seem to be busy.

Visiting with our young Hereford breeders at the JNHE, reminded me of a Super Bowl party our family attended at a friend's home last February where there were about 10 teens present. At one point during those crazy commercials, all 10 of those young men and ladies had their heads down texting or checking text messages on their phones.

It really caught me off guard, as the adults of the party sat around and carried on a conversation just like we always had. I also noticed a lot of text messaging going on at the JNHE. There was a great deal of information exchanged from those young people, and while their communication was different from the type I grew up with, I realized that they went about their business of participating in contests, washing, grooming and caring for their show animals, and networking with new friends from all over the country with the same passion and effort that I always remembered of past generations.

This year the 2009 JNHE was the largest Hereford show in the entire world. More than 1,100 head of cattle from 38 states and more than 640 young Generation Y exhibitors migrated across the

country to compete, meet and continue to maintain the burning passion for Hereford cattle and the Hereford industry.

I think my question was answered quite evidently. As I had the chance to meet these young people while lining up classes, I sensed the seriousness by which they go about their business. I think they're tough enough and they most certainly have better skills than I to thrive in this ever-changing technology-driven world we live in.

I'm confident that our industry will be in good hands with the next generation of leaders who will understand how to market cattle over the Internet, utilizing video. Their ability to process massive amounts of information very quickly will serve them well.

They will communicate with ease on a global scale, breaking language barriers and forming trade alliances. They will understand the powers of bovine genomics, a technology that could very well change our entire understanding of genetic improvement.

They have an appreciation of what their parents have done for them — the investment, the time, particularly the family time; and they will be smart business people, understanding the cost and value of producing a quality meat product for consumers here and abroad. Yes, Generation Y will be well equipped. **HW**

AHA Board candidates announced

Recently, Mark Cooper, American Hereford Association (AHA) nominating committee chairman, announced the slate of candidates who will be presented to the membership at the AHA Annual Meeting of the Membership in Kansas City Nov. 2. Three candidates will replace retiring directors Bill King, Paul Slayton and Wes Hudson. The candidates are as follows:

Cliff Copeland, Nara Visa, N.M.

Marty Lueck, Mountain Grove, Mo.

Dale Micheli, Ft. Bridger, Wyo.

Les Midla, Marianna, Pa.

Phillip Moon, Harrison, Ark.

Kevin Shultz, Haviland, Kan. **HW**