



## John Meents

The Hereford sale is humming with excitement. Buyers are tightly packed into the sale arena with a bidder number in one hand and catalog in the other. As the first lot enters the ring, the auctioneer starts his chant and the sale is underway. The enthusiasm builds with every bid, as the auctioneer's gavel hits the auction block and the ringmen yell out bids from the crowd; it is enough for every sale attendee's blood to rush and heart to race. Then the gavel makes its final slam on the block, and immediately is heard the enthusiastic voice from ringside as John Meents yells out the name of the proud buyer of Lot 1.

Days like these are what American Hereford Association (AHA) field representative John Meents enjoys most — helping breeders sell their cattle for the best price, while at the same time helping customers improve their breeding programs when buying new genetics.

John serves as the face of the breed for the upper Midwest region as he travels nine states, promoting Hereford cattle. While sale days may be his favorite days, year-round he works closely with breeders, assisting them in marketing purebred and commercial cattle.

He says his mission is to “enhance the value of Hereford genetics,” as he works as a liaison between the AHA and breeders, it is John's goal to communicate with members, informing them of new policy decisions made by the AHA Board of Directors.

Originating from northwest Indiana, John grew up on a small grain and livestock farm. John graduated from Purdue University with a bachelor's degree in agriculture. While a Boilermaker, he was a member of the 1977 livestock judging team coached by Roger Hunsley, who is also a former AHA field representative. John says Hunsley inspired him to work with purebred livestock.

John's past work experience includes the American Yorkshire Association, *Drovers Journal*, Dairyland Seed, American Polled Hereford Association and Hochstetler's Old Mill, Findley, Ohio.

Public relations is a big portion of John's job. While driving several thousand miles a year, he has become the familiar face at state and national sales. He also attends state association meetings to assist with organizational planning. These events give John another opportunity to update members about available AHA services and upcoming *Hereford World* advertising deadlines.

“When it comes to selling the business and representing Hereford breeders from territory five, I can't think of a more dedicated and qualified individual than John Meents,” says Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities. “He is a huge asset to the Hereford breed, and if I was a breeder, I would definitely want to have Meents ringside on sale day.”

The AHA marketing programs that have been developed in recent years are the biggest improvement John has seen since starting at AHA. He says, “The Certified Hereford Beef Influenced Feeder Calf Sale is a great example of new marketing. I commend John Woolfolk from Tennessee for having the foresight to lead the charge on these sales.

“The goal of these sales is to create a market where consignors receive fair market value for their Hereford calves,” John continues.

He says the best part of his job is working in an enthusiastic atmosphere filled with people who devote countless hours to the AHA. “I enjoy both the breeders and the staff in Kansas City. Craig, Joe and Jack are a pleasure to

work with, and I am honored to be part of that team. Amy Cowan is a hero for the AHA and needs to be commended on her success at every job she has held at AHA.”

As John reflects on his tenure at AHA, the memories that remain the most vivid are watching the breeders from his territory succeed in the showring. He will never forget when Ellis Kahn exhibited the Denver national champion female, SCF Fancy Judy Pace 815, in 2002 or the overwhelming thrills of joy that overcame Tom Hawk each time HAWK KO Enuff Faith 0506 won a show.

Joe Rickabaugh, AHA director of field management and seedstock marketing, says, “John is a role model for fieldmen and Hereford breeders. He is a professional that knows the meaning of selling advertising, representing his breeders at Hereford events and working the ring. I can't think of a better fieldman to clone.”

Aside from the long hours spent talking on the cell phone or driving from sale to sale, John is a committed husband and father. He and his wife, Peg, reside in Jenera, Ohio, where they raised their three children. All three attend The Ohio State University.

Jay, 25, is a student in the college of optometry and is married to Cassandra, who is a pharmacist. John and Peg's 21-year-old daughter, MaeLyda, is studying hospitality management, and Emily, 19, is majoring in family and consumer science education.

The Meents family is active in the Arlington United Methodist Church. At home John enjoys working with the commercial cattle and assisting his neighbor farmer. John is an avid Big 10 sports fan and enjoys cheering the Boilermakers to victory.

As John marks his nine-year anniversary with the AHA, he says it is the people who make his job so wonderful. When describing his territory, he says, “Without a doubt, territory five has the ‘supreme grand champion best people.’”

With the strong staff and devoted breeders, John says he is excited to see what the future brings for Hereford cattle. **HW**