

Live it. Love it. Lead it.



2011 Herdsman of the Year Mark Sims is a true representative of VitaFerm's 2011 JNHE theme — he lives and loves the Hereford breed while serving as a leader and role model for other Hereford youth.

by **Angie Stump Denton**

From the break of dawn till the sun goes down, from mid-May till mid-August, there is one place to find 2011 Herdsman of the Year Mark Sims — the show barn.

Mark, from Elgin, Okla., was voted by his peers to win this year's Herdsman of the Year title and coveted belt buckle at the 2011 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). Mark joins an elite group who have won both the JNHE senior showmanship and Herdsman of the Year titles.

Living it

"A good herdsman is someone who eats and sleeps caring for cattle," Mark

says. And those who know Mark agree that is what he does. When he is home from college on summer and winter breaks he lives at the Sims' barn, working with the show calves. From breaking calves to working hair to clipping, Mark says it is a never-ending cycle that "he just can't get enough of."

A member of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) and Junior Hereford Association of Oklahoma (JHAO) for 13 years, Mark has shown at every junior national since 1998.

Some highlights of Mark's career have been winning the champion polled owned heifer at the 2006

JNHE and champion senior showmanship honors at the 2009 JNHE. He says the Hereford friends he has made along the way have been just as important as the ribbons and banners he's accumulated through the years. "There is something special about Hereford people. If it wasn't for showing Herefords, I would have not met Kirbie Day," Mark adds with a smile.

Mark and Kirbie are one of those "Hereford romances" that started in the showing and continues today.

Loving it

Mark says what he enjoys most about showing Herefords is that it is a family affair. Mark's parents are Ruth and Eddie Sims. He also has two older siblings who also grew up through the Hereford youth program — Matt and Catie.

"We all have pretty hectic schedules," he explains. "I'm going to college, Catie is a nurse and Matt has his own business and kids. Everybody says JNHE is like a vacation, but for us it is so much more than that — it is a time for us all to be together.

"We probably spend more time together during JNHE week than we do the entire year. For some families, they spend time together at sporting events or going to the lake, for us it is showing Hereford cattle. My brother started the tradition, which is now continuing with his kids."

Two of Mark's biggest fans are his nephews — Jake and Evan Sims. They both say Uncle Mark is "awesome." Jake adds, "He works

The JNHE is more than a summer vacation for the Sims family. It is time when they are together doing what they love to do — show Herefords. Pictured (l to r) are: Holt Tripp, Catie Sims, Colt Keffer, Eddie and Ruth Sims, Kirbie Day, and Mark, Evan, Jacob, Matt and Aimee Sims.





Mark Sims, Elgin, Okla., was named the 2011 Herdsman of the Year during the JNHE in Kansas City. Pictured presenting the award is the 2010 Herdsman of the Year Roxane Gebhart, Claremore, Okla.

Mark's top five tips

2011 Junior Hereford Herdsman of the Year Mark Sims from Elgin, Okla., shares these tips with Hereford juniors:

- 1) Hard work is second to none.
- 2) Getting one ready does not start a week before the show. Watching cattle grow and develop from the day they are born helps you prepare them for the ring. You need to work with them regularly, long before the week of the show.
- 3) Be knowledgeable of livestock. Honestly evaluate what they are. Don't make excuses for them.
- 4) Don't overthink or overanalyze. I like to live by an old adage: "If it is not broke, don't fix it." For example, if you have found a feeding program and daily hair care ritual that works for you, don't change it just because someone else is doing it differently.
- 5) Always make new friends. Watch and learn from people to improve your skills — you never stop learning. **HW**

really hard to make sure his cattle look good, and he has taught me how to show."

Mark says, "Winning Herdsman of the Year is a goal I have had for a long time. When showing cattle, you lead an animal into the ring, and you have really no control over what the judge thinks that day.

"For herdsman honors, you are voted on by your peers, and you are recognized based on your abilities to get the animal ready for the showing — not only at the show but the months leading up to the show at home," Mark adds. "I feel very honored that NJHA members thought I was worthy of receiving such an honor."

Mark attributes his success to a distinguished list of Hereford enthusiasts. The top of his mentor list is his dad and brother, Matt. Others he credits are Chisolm Kinder, Todd Herman, Mark Kelley, Colt Keffer and Chris Stephens.

"I've been lucky to learn from a great group of people," Mark says. "Dad taught me the right way to feed one while other guys taught me how to show one and how to use a set of clippers.

"I've always watched what other people were doing and asked questions. You can take different ideas from different people and develop your feeding, daily care and fitting program."

Mark has one more year of his NJHA career, but after he walks out of the JNHE showing for the last time, he says it won't be the last JNHE he attends.

"I plan to outdo my dad's record for the number of consecutive junior

nationals attended," Mark says. "I plan to be there to help Jake and Evan, and someday, hopefully, my kids will participate as well."

Leading it

Mark has been a leader in the NJHA and JHAO for many years, serving in 2009-10 as JHAO president. He also served on the Oklahoma Junior Cattlemen's Board for three years.

He has been a mentor to numerous Hereford youth who hope to follow in his footsteps inside and outside the showing.

His enthusiasm and leadership do not go unnoticed. At the 2011 JNHE, he was also recognized as the winner of the Wesley Rakestraw Hereford Enthusiast Award.

Chris Stephens, EE Ranches Inc. director of operations, has been a mentor and close friend to Mark for many years. "Mark will be a Hereford industry leader for life," Chris says. "Young and old alike can learn a great deal from Mark's belief in leading by example, to take on life's obstacles with a positive attitude and to give it all your best to achieve success.

"But what I admire the most about Mark is his respectful and easy nature when working with others."

Mark is a junior at Oklahoma State University (OSU), majoring in animal science with a minor in business. At OSU he was selected to serve on the 2009-10 Freshmen Representative

Council as well as elected the 2010-11 College of Ag Student Council executive reporter and 2011 homecoming walkaround committee chairman and currently serving as an Alpha Gamma Rho executive officer.

When his junior career comes to an end, Mark will continue to live and love Herefords while developing his leadership in the beef industry. After graduating from OSU, he plans to attend auctioneering school and pursue a real estate license. He also hopes to continue his family Hereford operation while following in his dad's and brother's footsteps as an auctioneer and sale manager.

"I'm forever indebted to my parents and the rest of my family for what they have done for me," Mark says. "I couldn't have done it without them." **HW**



Mark's entourage — brother, Matt; sister, Catie; and nephews, Jake and Evan — as he heads to the showing.