

# Take the NJHA Challenge

*You can teach a calf to lead, but a calf can teach you to be a leader.*

Most National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) members join the Association very young. Becoming a leader therefore is far from mind. You may have joined NJHA because you had older siblings who were members or it was something that has been in your family's "blood" for several generations. Whatever the reason the NJHA offers a wide range of positive challenges, one of which is the opportunity to sharpen your leadership skills.

Typical peewee members start their NJHA careers by preparing for the first show season. Taking the first steps toward leading the calf can be as challenging as taking the first steps toward meeting new friends at the show. Rinsing a calf daily and practicing with the showstick help members build a sense of pride and responsibility.

The next step is exhibiting the calf. The first year can be difficult. Peewees may be overwhelmed by all the routines to be learned, not to mention all the new, unfamiliar people. Still, once they arrive at that first show, they are proud of the tasks they've accomplished and that makes it a little easier to meet that first new friend.

While at the show the younger members may notice the older members and start wondering if

someday they'll be as successful and have the opportunity to take on leadership roles in the organization. Each day of the show gets easier.

Junior members' second year comes more natural because of the previous year's experiences. It's not as difficult to break a calf to lead and prepare for the upcoming show season. As the shows get closer, juniors become anxious to compete and to catch up with the friends made during last year's shows.

Juniors can challenge themselves by becoming involved in the many activities offered at the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). This may mean attending a junior meeting or participating in a contest.

What makes the NJHA unique is that membership provides more than just an opportunity to show cattle. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine all the people I would meet and the miles I would travel to attend Hereford functions. Showing at the JNHE is not only an excellent way to compete in one of the nation's largest junior shows, but also a great way to learn more about the breed while reuniting with Hereford friends from across the country. The JNHE offers something for everyone — from photography to livestock judging to Hereford idol to team marketing.

Members can enjoy more summer fun by attending the Program for Reaching Individuals Determined to Excel (PRIDE) Convention. PRIDE is a fantastic opportunity to expand your horizons within the NJHA. The three-day conference focuses on beef industry knowledge and leadership development.

Don't let these opportunities stop with the NJHA; continue to involve yourself in other areas such as your school, FFA, 4-H, agriculture organizations and community. Challenge yourself to become a well-rounded individual who can contribute special talents in a wide range of areas.

As NJHA members get older, typically they become more competitive in the showing and in other events. Eventually the hard work and dedication pays off. Before long members develop into role models by influencing and assisting new junior members with their first-year projects. That first calf the junior members taught to lead has helped develop life-long leaders in the Hereford industry and beyond.

With a new year upon us, now is the time to start thinking and making plans for 2007. For a New Year's resolution, I encourage all NJHA members to take on a new challenge. This challenge could be expanding your show string, participating in a new activity offered through the NJHA or increasing your involvement at school. No matter what the challenge is, it'll have a positive outcome because you dared to do something different and gain new insight.

Whether you're just starting out or if this has been your passion for several years we all have something in common. All of us began our journey by breaking and teaching that first calf to lead. It is because of that challenge we are all lifetime leaders in this association. **HW**

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