



Brooke Jensen was crowned the 2013-14 National Hereford Queen during the American Royal.

by **Lynsey Meharg**

Once-in-a-Lifetime Opportunity

It was once said that enthusiasm moves the world. For many Hereford juniors, the opportunity to spend a year representing their breed would be the chance of a lifetime, but, for one young woman each year, that opportunity becomes a reality as the National Hereford Queen is crowned.

Born into the Hereford breed, Brooke Jensen of Courtland, Kan., has her work cut out for her as she begins her year long journey as an agriculture advocate, the face of the Hereford breed and a role model for countless young Hereford women.

“As a young girl, I always looked up to the National Hereford Queen. They were an inspiration of the kind of person I should grow up to be: a poised leader, intelligent and kind,” Brooke says. “I want to be a role model and make an impact on the youth like the past queens did for me.”

With her family looking on, Brooke was crowned the 2013-14 National Hereford Queen prior

to the selection of the champion Hereford bull during the 2013 American Royal National Hereford Show held Nov. 3 in Kansas City, Mo. As longtime members of the Hereford industry themselves, Kevin and Sheila Jensen have raised their daughter and two sons, Brady and Ben, since birth in an environment full of a passion for Hereford cattle.

Brooke competed against six other young women from across the U.S. for the title. The National Hereford Queen Program is managed by the National Hereford Women. Queen candidates are evaluated on their involvement with and knowledge of the Hereford breed, behavior, attitude, appearance, and interaction with producers, as well as their résumés and interviews. Judges look for a responsible, well-rounded young lady who is willing to spend an entire year traveling all over the country to represent the Hereford breed to the best of her ability.

First runner-up honors went to Amy Green, Munfordville, Ky.; Katie Burns, Coulterville, Ill., was named second runner-up and Miss Congeniality.



Hereford royalty honored during the 2013 American Royal (l to r) are: Whitney Andras, Checotah, Okla., 2012-13 National Hereford Queen; Brooke Jensen, Courtland, Kan., 2013-14 National Hereford Queen; Amy Green, Munfordville, Ky., first runner-up; and Katie Burns, Coulterville, Ill., second runner-up and Miss Congeniality.

Promoting Herefords since birth

“I was raised around Hereford cattle and breeders from the start. I’ve met and learned from numerous well-known Hereford cattlemen and women through traveling to Hereford events and my parents’ production sales,” Brooke says. “My blood is deep in this association and industry.”

Through her involvement in both the Kansas Junior Hereford Association (KJHA) and the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA), Brooke has met friends from many places and visited locations across the country while receiving life-changing opportunities. She began showing cattle at a young age and exhibited her first animal at the Junior

National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Indianapolis, Ind., in 2003, when she was 7 years old. Since then, Brooke has accomplished numerous achievements both in the ring and through other NJHA activities such as the Hereford Bowl and contests including extemporaneous speaking, team fitting, team marketing and photography.

With her poise and determination, she is a fierce competitor in the national showmanship contest each year. Through the years, she has been named champion peewee, reserve junior and reserve intermediate showman.

In the KJHA she has served as a director for two years and as the 2013 Kansas Hereford Queen.

"Herefords are a huge part of my life," Brooke says. "It's an incredible experience being actively involved in an industry with the most amazing, hardworking people in the world."

Serving as an ambassador

Having always admired the figure in white known as the National Hereford Queen, Brooke is thankful for the opportunities she has had through the junior association and wanted to be able to give back to her breed in some way, she says. The National Queen Program allowed Brooke to run for a position that would allow her to affect the Hereford breed in her own way. As queen, Brooke has a busy year ahead of her as she travels the nation representing her breed.

"As queen, I'm a leading figure and will be a part of every national show and sale," Brooke explains. "My responsibilities are to lead in the classes and hand out awards at every national Hereford show for the next year and as an ambassador of the Hereford breed I am to represent and be a role model for all members."

Serving as queen is more than just handing out ribbons. The history and knowledge Brooke possesses of the Hereford breed drives her passion to make a lasting impact on the Hereford industry during her year of service as National Hereford Queen. Brooke sees the value of her role in the potential for leadership development in herself and others.

"Becoming queen is my way to contribute back to the breed for all the amazing opportunities and life lessons the American Hereford Association, National Junior Hereford Association and Kansas Junior Hereford Association have taught me," Brooke says.

With a few new ideas that she would like to incorporate throughout the year as well as at the 2014 JNHE, Brooke is well on her way to making her own impact on the breed.

"I hope to make this a very successful year as National Hereford Queen," Brooke says. "My goal is to maintain the highly qualified character that this role represents."

The opportunity to serve as National Hereford Queen is one that many young girls dream of within the Hereford industry, and Brooke encourages young Hereford women to become involved in their state queen programs as well as at the national level. The opportunity to build relationships with fellow young Hereford enthusiasts was one of the highlights of Brooke's experience running for queen.

"Meeting and creating a friendship with the six amazing, beautiful girls that I had the chance to spend the weekend with while running for National Hereford Queen really made it a great experience," says Brooke. "I highly recommend every girl try to be state queen and run for national queen."

Regardless of the outcome, the process National Hereford Queen candidates go through before selection provides participants with a great opportunity to build interview and public speaking skills.



Whitney Andras, 2012-13 National Hereford Queen crowns Brooke prior to the selection of the champion bull during the American Royal.

The opportunities available to youth through the program are boundless and diverse.

"Even if at the end of the day you aren't the one walking away with the new banner and crown, you won't regret the decision of trying," Brooke says. "It's been a wonderful experience so far, and I can't wait to see what the next year has in store for me."

After graduating from high school in May 2014, Brooke plans to attend Kansas State University to pursue a dual major in agricultural business and food science. Ultimately, Brooke would like to be employed in a field related to food science where she hopes to promote the beef industry. Even in the future, Brooke plans to stay true to her Hereford roots by continuing to build her herd of purebred Hereford cattle and remaining active in the showing.

"The Hereford industry is huge right now, and I am so happy to be a part of it," Brooke says. "'Once-in-a-lifetime opportunity' is the only way to describe what this means to me. I'm honored to represent the breed that built me." **HW**



Herefords are a family affair for the Jensens. Brooke's family, who were in Kansas City to support her as she vied for National Hereford Queen, (pictured, l to r) are: her brothers, Ben and Brady; her mother, Sheila; and her father, Kevin.