

# Steer Rule Changes: Why Are They Important?

Steer exhibitors at the 2016 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) will go through a different process for registering their steers (see *AHA DNA show rule*). Exhibitors will have to submit DNA for their steers by April 1. Once an exhibitor has received the results of his or her steer's DNA test and the steer's DNA aligns with the registration papers, the exhibitor can then register his or her steer for the JNHE.

For those of you who have been around the breed and the JNHE, or even if you haven't, the steer show has adjusted and changed its rules throughout the years with the goal of making the breed as a whole that much stronger.

The Hereford breed has grown in its popularity over the years as well. Unfortunately, with that growth in popularity has also been the growth

of Hereford marked cattle that are not genetically purebred Herefords. As our breed grows in popularity, the American Hereford Association (AHA) must continue to protect the integrity of our breed, including both exhibitors and breeders alike.

No doubt we all want the best for the breed and everyone involved with it, but mistakes happen whether they are intentional or not. The cattle industry as a whole has changed so much over the years with a drastic increase in things like online sales and the number of times cattle can pass from hand to hand before they reach their final destination.

I feel totally confident when I say that this new rule has been put into place with the exhibitors' best interests at heart. Even though the phenotype of an animal may appear Hereford, unfortunately, the genotype through DNA testing can tell you otherwise.

I have been in this breed my entire life and have never thought to question whether the genetic makeup of animals that I buy matches the papers that come with them, but, unfortunately, I had to learn the hard way that, simply put, times have changed. As an exhibitor, finding out after the fact is devastating and heartbreaking, and something I wouldn't want any exhibitor to go through. This new DNA rule for JNHE steers is there to protect the exhibitors before they

get to the show, and I think it is a fantastic stride for our breed.

To further expand upon the new DNA rules, if a steer's DNA doesn't come back matching the papers, the exhibitor will have thirty days to identify the issue and retest. This period would be the opportunity for the exhibitor to identify if there was an issue such as a sire mix-up, and, for example, he or she merely has the wrong Hereford sire listed.

If an exhibitor at the JNHE or any AHA show has an animal whose DNA is pulled and it doesn't match the registration papers, then that exhibitor's AHA and National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) memberships will be revoked for one year, and therefore, the exhibitor will not be eligible to participate in all AHA and NJHA shows for that year.

We now have the opportunity as exhibitors to identify DNA issues before we even arrive at the JNHE. This DNA testing/rule change is a great way to protect yourself as an exhibitor, and I think the AHA and NJHA are to be commended for building upon the rules for the betterment of the breed.

We encourage you to get your JNHE steers DNA tested prior to April 1 so that you can be ahead of the rush. We should all be extremely thankful to be involved with a breed that continues to make changes and improvements so that our breed can flourish. **HW**



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## AHA DNA show rule

If an American Hereford Association (AHA) registered heifer, bull or steer does not match the DNA sample taken at an AHA sponsored event, then the exhibitor would have their membership revoked and will not be eligible to participate in any AHA sponsored shows, events and sales for one year after the first violation. The membership ban would run from one year from the event date where the situation occurred.

On the second violation, the exhibitor would have their AHA membership banned for life.

If the DNA sample taken was inconclusive as to the Hereford parentage (artificial insemination [AI] versus bull bred, or a mix up on AI semen used for breeding or embryo transfer) then the exhibitor will have 30 days to submit a new sample. **HW**