



It's the Life in Your Years

Taylor Belle Matheny, 2015-16 National Hereford Queen, reflects on a year representing the breed.

A year ago I embarked on a journey that allowed me to travel the country, to represent the Hereford breed and to meet people from all facets of the agriculture industry. When I was crowned National Hereford Queen in Kansas City, Mo., last year, I was so excited to have the opportunity to represent the breed that I love so much, but I was unaware of how deeply rewarding this honor would be.

I am Taylor Belle Matheny, a fifth-generation Hereford breeder from Mays Lick, Ky. I am currently a sophomore at Kansas State University, majoring in animal sciences and agricultural communications.

As a little girl, I would find pictures of my mom serving as the 1988 National Polled Hereford Queen and set a goal to one day follow in her footsteps. Traveling to shows and seeing the National Hereford Queen during my childhood only fueled my dream to one day serve in that capacity. On Nov. 1, 2015, my mom and I became the first mother and daughter duo to serve as National Hereford Queen. On that day I started a journey that would inspire me, grow my leadership skills and help me learn about and represent the breed of cattle that means so much to me.

The white outfit has been an icon in the Hereford breed and continues to be known throughout the beef industry. The first show that I attended as National Hereford Queen was in my home state at the North American International Livestock Exposition. The green shavings in Louisville stained my white boots, but it was the first time I got to be in the outfit that I had dreamed of one day wearing.

It is hard to believe that this past year went so fast. Each time I put on the crown and sash I was reminded how lucky I was to have grown up in the Hereford breed.

At the JNHE I hosted a couple of events that will have a lasting effect on me. The Hereford breed is comprised of members who have compassion for one another. For my National Queen Service Project, Kiss the Cow 4 Nathan, junior and senior breeders came together and raised \$17,000 to benefit Nathan Largent, a junior member

battling cancer. The Queen's Tea was a tremendous success. The highlight of that week was meeting young ladies from across the country who will someday represent our breed.

Throughout my reign, I met breeders and youth from all over the nation. Hereford breeders were eager to welcome and to help me in any way possible. The queen program has a bright future. To any girl who is considering running for state or national queen, I encourage her to do so. This has been one of the most rewarding years of my life and has allowed me to grow in so many ways.

This journey has put me in the spotlight countless times, but it couldn't have been possible without a very special team. My family was there to support me and to help make this dream come true. The staff at the American Hereford Association was has been great to work with. The National Hereford Women was also an integral part of my success. Its continued support is greatly appreciated. Hereford breeders made me feel welcome and appreciated. Whether it was a smile or a helping hand, I always knew that it was a team effort in a family atmosphere.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." This past year has been one of the most rewarding and fulfilling I have experienced. From the bottom of my heart I thank each and every person that I met along the way for making this year so special. While this chapter in my life is over, I look forward to my future in the Hereford breed.

— **Taylor Belle Matheny**
2015-16 National Hereford Queen

