

# The Rooster

Hereford youth exemplify a good work ethic and a respect for strong opinions.



Jack Ward is the executive vice president of the American Hereford Association. He can be reached at [jward@hereford.org](mailto:jward@hereford.org).

I was attending a meeting recently, and when I left the meeting place I read a sign that said 2017 is the Year of the Rooster. This got my attention, and I was unaware that the rooster is 10th in a 12-year cycle of animals in the Chinese zodiac. I then Googled the importance of the rooster and found this definition: Roosters are considered to be in charge of time, as in crowing to greet the day. In addition, the rooster respects those with strong opinions and a good work ethic.

Each year, the September issue of the *Hereford World* highlights the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) and the successes of our junior membership at this event. I think this year's animal, the rooster, describes these junior members well.

An event like the JNHE takes a lot of planning by a big group including American Hereford Association (AHA) staff, state sponsors and representatives, the AHA Board of Directors, junior advisors and the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) board of directors. I commend everyone involved, and I thank them for their hard work. But for me, it's seeing juniors in action that makes this all worthwhile.

## Building character

Just as the rooster, this group of juniors, along with their parents, was up early and ready to get a day started. Each morning the junior board met with staff and advisors to organize the day, to make sure a schedule was in place for each of the events and to ensure each of us knew our role in those events.

The rooster also has a good work ethic and respect for those with strong opinions, and this set of

Hereford youth has both. It is just incredible to walk through the barns and to see families working together, not only feeding and washing cattle but preparing meals for states and organizing practices for contests throughout the week. It didn't matter the age; I saw kids in the hallways of the show facility and in the parking lots practicing speeches, skits and quiz bowl material or watching showmanship presentations.

It is also clear these kids have strong opinions, and it's fun to see how all of them share their opinions in a respectful and meaningful way. At the end of the day, they merge ideas and opinions to create a fantastic end product.

This year my wife, Mary Ann, and I watched our youngest son participate in his last national junior show. For us, we can remember the long hot days and the work that goes into not just preparing a heifer for the show but also the work that goes into participating in contests. This exercise taught our kids a lot about life because they had to meet deadlines, be prompt and work hard to accomplish a goal. All these things are important to build our kids into good, productive adults.

I want to thank everyone who makes events like these possible. Whether it is the county or state fair, a leadership activity or the JNHE, it takes a lot of resources, but at the end of the day, it is rewarding to see our kids grow through such important activities.

From now on, I will always remember the rooster as the symbol of those involved in the livestock industry because we are up early, have strong opinions and a great work ethic. **HW**