



Pictured at the 2019 National Western Stock Show (l to r) are: Shane Bedwell, AHA chief operating officer and director of breed improvement; Matt Scasta, 2019 Hereford Herdsman of the Year; Emily Meinhardt, National Hereford Queen; and Jack Ward, AHA executive vice president.

Driven Toward Excellence

Passion for youth and competition fuel 2019 Hereford Herdsman Matt Scasta's desire to excel within the Hereford industry.

by *Kayla Jennings*

The junior champions had been named, and the judges had awarded the obligatory slap to the prize bulls. The cattle and exhibitors in the carload and pen shows had endured snow, and the best of Hereford genetics had been sold as the gavel lay silent Friday evening. Saturday had arrived, and Hereford breeders from across the country gathered on the Hill for the last show day in Denver, as everyone knows it.

While Jan. 19, 2019, drew toward an end, the most elite females in the Hereford industry were paraded around the ring one last time. The Boyd duo evaluated the livestock in front of them, and before long, the champion horned female was selected and handed a prestigious banner from the National Hereford Queen decked in white. Hereford breeders standing ringside applauded as Moore Cattle Co. and Buck Cattle Co., Madill, Okla.,



Immediately following the announcement, Scasta was congratulated by Jack Ward, Shane Bedwell, and his boss and friend, Jirl Buck.



stood victorious. Little did herdsman Matt Scasta and crew of Buck Cattle Co. know, the excitement was not over just yet.

Moments later, Scasta was called center stage to receive one of the highest honors bestowed among Hereford breeders — the 2019 Hereford Herdsman of the Year. By definition, “a herdsman is a manager, breeder, or tender of livestock.” However, this honor represents much more than the simple definition courtesy of Merriman-Webster.

A true herdsman is up before daybreak, prepared to take on the day and whatever it may bring. A true herdsman leads by example — he does not ask of his crew anything he would not get his hands dirty doing himself. A true herdsman has a keen sense of competition and drive to push youth to be their best inside and outside the showring. A true herdsman exhibits superior skill both on the home front — calving heifers, breeding cows, following health protocol, cleaning pens — and on show day — preparing cattle for their big debut in the ring.

These qualities, and more, come to mind when fellow Hereford breeders think of Scasta, and it showed in their votes leading up to the big announcement.

“It’s truly an honor, especially with all the other amazing candidates that were nominated,” Scasta says with a grin. “I feel part of the Hereford family now.”

A lifestyle

The Bryan, Texas, native grew up on a large commercial cattle operation, where he competitively showed Brangus cattle throughout his childhood. This season of life spurred his passion for the cattle industry and propelled him into the successful career he has today.

Prior to his tenure with Buck Cattle Co., Scasta gained much of his experience fitting cattle for Billy Rash and learning from Cheramie Viator. Back then, he actually had a hand in selecting females from Buck Cattle Co. for the Rash family to exhibit across several shows. It was not long after Carrie Adams, Rash’s step-daughter, was

finished showing that Scasta packed his bags for the red dirt of Oklahoma.

After some time dayworking for the Buck family, it was clear to Jirl and his wife, Brenda, that they needed to make Scasta a more permanent part of the operation.

“My favorite thing about Matt is to have seen him mature and grow from being 18 years old to today, and the responsibilities he has taken on in that time,” Jirl explains. “He has been just like family. The thing that first drew me to Matt was the talent he had at a young age, and his work ethic was second-to-none. That is something he has maintained to this day. He takes it all to heart. He is most concerned about making sure the cattle are right and things are right in the whole operation — he is extremely talented, but his work ethic separates him from the rest of the field.”

Today, Scasta and his family reside in Madill, where their two boys, Reign

and Cutter, help on the ranch and play competitive select baseball. He and his wife, Tabatha, married in 2005. She is a co-owner at a local shop — Amazing Grace Boutique.

As the current show and sale cattle manager, Scasta plays a role in everything from breeding to preparing show cattle to construction and mechanic work on the ranch.

“I’ve got two guys that work here with me full time, and I feel like I’m just as equal as those guys,” Scasta describes. “I wouldn’t ask my guys to do anything I wouldn’t do. This is a multi-purpose operation. Some days we go help the cow guys all day long, and we never get back to the barn. It’s a pretty universal operation, and we’re a little different here. We run 500 cows, and most of the time that comes first.”

With that many cows and daily operations at the hands of the crew, Scasta knows none of it would be possible without their talent and dedication to their work and one another.

“I have been very fortunate to have many talented guys through here over the years,” he notes. “Some have come and gone and came back, but most all of them are still some of my best friends. With that said, I would like to sincerely thank the Moore boys, Jeremy Clark, David Young, and Seth Buckley. Without them on our side, we could have not done what we have done over the years.”

The Bucks attribute much of their success to Scasta and his team. They say he takes pride in everything he does, whether it be clipping cattle, fitting for



Matt is grateful for his family’s encouragement and help, both on the ranch and on the road.

a show or building a fence. On a typical show day, he can be found working nonstop at the stalls — and many times he never sees the showring. Buck Cattle Co. is proud to say Scasta has worked on almost 90 grand or reserve champions at national shows including the National Western Stock Show, the Fort Worth Stock Show, the American Royal, the North American International Livestock Expo, the National Junior Maine-Anjou Show and the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

“Matt’s goal in life is to be successful,” Jirl says. “He enjoys the cattle, he wants to be successful in the showring and he loves the production side of it. He is a great cowman, and he is very talented.”

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Matt and Tabatha have two boys, Cutter (l) and Reign (r), who keep them busy with sports and other activities.



Scasta says he would not be where he is today without the support of his family and friends. Pictured (l to r) are: Jackson Swink, Sam Barron, David Young, National Hereford Queen Emily Meinhardt, Cole Moore, Garrett Cloud, Blakelee Hayes, Becca Moore, Brenda Buck, Bailey Buck, Matt Scasta, Jirl Buck, Kynlee Dailey, Jeremy Clark, Chancee Clark, Carlee Clark, Freda Moore, Craig Moore and Ethan Moore.



The excitement was contagious as Matt and Bailey celebrated a big win at her last JNHE in 2015.



Undoubtedly, Scasta says being a mainstay on the Buck crew for more than 22 years — and with the Hereford breed for the past eight years — has been an awesome experience. He is quick to say none of it would have been possible without his mentorship and friendship from Jirl, Brenda and Bailey. “They’ve been awesome to me and my family,” Scasta notes. “We’re more of a family than an employee. Honestly, we’re best friends.”

Regarding their longstanding relationship, Jirl adds, “Matt’s number one is taking care of things at Buck Cattle Co. He has given some heart and soul to that, and we could never thank him enough for what he has done for us. My daughter went through all the showing, and Matt was like a big brother to her. He has been just a good role model. Like I said, his work ethic is where he really stands out.”

For the next generation

Since 1987 Buck Cattle Co. has been raising and selling show cattle to junior members striving to experience success in the showing. The enterprise calves both spring and fall to meet its goal of producing cattle with style, balance and power to compete in the showing and also to perform in the real world of beef production. Beginning with just two sales per year, the company now hosts a monthly online auction, which offers a variety of products including show prospects, herd bulls, semen packages and bred females.

Scasta has been instrumental in providing these resources to customers and maintaining the mission of helping customers, namely junior members, succeed in the

showring and with their cow herds. As Scasta would say, this “full-blown family operation” maintains a keen focus on developing junior members, as they have seen the immense value in those programs through Jirl and Brenda’s daughter, Bailey.

“Everything we do is pretty much focused toward the junior exhibitors, and that’s how we’ve built our business,” Scasta notes. In fact, these junior events are where some of their biggest honors and best memories are held. Scasta fondly remembers the last year Bailey showed and took home champion honors at the JNHE. He has been present her entire show career, and to see her succeed after all those years of hard work was a truly exciting moment for both the Buck family and Scasta. In tandem, Jirl notes one his favorite memories from over the years is Bailey’s first JNHE champion.

“The first junior national champion Bailey had with Herefords was pretty special to Matt because the Hereford breed is somewhat intimidating with the numbers, quality and the people involved,” Jirl recalls. “All of us, including Matt, really respect those within the Hereford breed. That win meant a lot to him because it was a realization of, ‘Hey, we can compete with these guys.’”

After wins like those, Jirl notes how Scasta’s true passion shines through. “The thing that is really surprising about Matt is most people don’t realize how soft-hearted he is,” Jirl notes. “He can be emotional after a big win or success. That shows his true passion for the business, and most people don’t see that side of him. He is extremely tender-hearted, and he is extremely

passionate about it. Not many people have been able to see that side, and I am glad I have.”

That same heart is present as Scasta talks about helping juniors from taking their first step into the showing to their last step out. Scasta realizes everyone must start somewhere, and the future of the cattle industry is at the hands of the juniors he is fortunate to help year in and year out.

“There are several families that we’ve started their kids off at nine years old, and they have unbelievable cow herds now,” Scasta notes. “Really, that makes you happy more than anything. I feel like I’ve been a part of raising several kids along the way that have done good.”

At the end of the day, his biggest advice for juniors hoping to thrive in the cattle business is to discover where their true passion lies. “They have to enjoy it for themselves,” he says. “We’ve all seen parents and other people that push and drive, but those juniors have to want it themselves to be truly successful.”

After more than 22 years on the job, Scasta has not changed his mantra. It is all about working day in and day out to produce the best cattle possible for the customers taking them home, regardless of their operational goals. Perhaps the Buck family sums it up best: “Matt Scasta is a loyal employee, a great partner, a terrific husband and father and an all-around outstanding guy. Buck Cattle Co. notes how very fortunate [we] are to have Matt Scasta heading up [the] operation.” **HW**