

Honoring Heritage and Celebrating Success

The AHA thanks all involved for making the 2019 Annual Meeting a huge success.



Jack Ward is the executive vice president of the American Hereford Association. He can be reached at jward@hereford.org.

We recently hosted the Annual Membership Meeting and Conference during the American Royal, and it was another great event. The American Hereford Association (AHA) staff deserves a lot of credit for putting together the event, which consisted of informative educational seminars, an incredible awards reception, a great annual meeting, and a strong sale and show.

Friday's educational component was well attended and the topics covered were well received with plenty of excellent questions and comments. Sarah Place, Ph.D., started off the educational forum with a great presentation on the sustainability of the beef industry. She shared the U.S. has made significant improvements in genetics, management and efficiencies, and outlined key points in favor of beef's positive effects on the environment. Leoma Wells, GeneSeek, outlined the benefits of genomically testing cattle and applauded the membership for utilizing genetic improvement tools. Brian Bertelsen, U.S. Premium Beef, touched on value-added and grid premium programs offered to the cattle feeders. Mark Core, Vermeer, concluded the educational sessions by expanding on topics presented at "The Brand" Marketing Summit.

The awards reception is always a highlight of the weekend. During the evening, we honor some of the most talented junior members with scholarships. In the midst of the event, I had a parent of one of the scholarship winners inform me that without the help of these scholarships, her daughter would not have been able to attend

the college of her choice, nor study the curriculum of her choice. It certainly is critical we continue to support these talented juniors. As well, the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) Fed Steer Shootout continues to evolve, and with the support of the folks at BioZyme Inc., we have added some additional educational components to the program.

Another exciting element of the awards night is honoring our 50-year Golden Breeders and listening to the history of their programs. Unique to this year, the AHA also honored the Olsen and Stahly ranches, as they have been involved in the National Reference Sire Program since the evaluation's inception 20 years ago. We also recognized our valued partners of the Certified Hereford Beef® program who diligently promote the brand every year.

Certainly, the highlight of the evening's reception is to honor the Hall of Fame and Merit inductees. It was great to see the families recognized on stage accepting their awards and to hear their stories and the commitment these families have to the Hereford breed.

A huge thank-you needs to go out to the nominating committee for putting together another very strong slate of Board candidates, and we thank all of the voting delegates for attending and electing a new set of Board directors.

The weekend concluded with a great Hereford show and sale and the naming of our new National Hereford Queen — congratulations to Melanie Fishel, N.C., and to all of the queen candidates.

I would like to wish all of you a merry Christmas, and may God bless you and your family. **HW**