

Poised with Purpose

Melanie Fishel, North Carolina, stands ready to represent the Hereford breed as the 2019-20 National Hereford Queen.

by Brooklyn Adam

As the shaving dust settles and the last calf leaves the ring, still standing is the most dedicated and strong woman to represent the Hereford breed — the National Hereford Queen. Taking the reins as the new National Hereford Queen, Melanie Fishel represents not only the Hereford breed but also her home state of North Carolina and the family of Hereford enthusiasts.

As the first member in her family to be crowned Hereford royalty, she wears her crown with great pride and carries her love for Hereford cattle, not only on her head but deep in her heart. A fourth-generation Hereford breeder, Melanie comes from roots that run deep in this outstanding breed. Growing up on a family farm with her parents, Neil and Karen Fishel, and siblings, Clara and Wesley, she found her love for Herefords went beyond the showing.

She pursued her goal of becoming a state queen and donned the North Carolina Hereford Queen sash in 2018. Not quite ready to retire the sash and crown, she knew her time was not over. She ran for National Hereford Queen in 2018 and was named the first runner-up at the National Hereford Queen Contest. Feeling defeated but more



determined than ever, she wore her shiny crown, stood tall and faced her fears and ran for the title of National Hereford Queen again in 2019.

The suspense built for Melanie after the grand champion slap at the American Royal Herford Show. In Hale Area, Melanie stood alongside seven other queen candidates awaiting the announcement of a lifetime. “And the new 2019-20 National Hereford Queen is Melanie Fishel!”

With great gratitude and poise, Melanie stood smiling cheek-to-cheek, feeling proud to begin her reign as the national queen. Her story is just beginning, and with new and exciting ideas for the Hereford family, Melanie is proud of her accomplishments and has her eyes focused on the upcoming year.

Age: 21

Where are your royal roots? Kernersville, N.C.

Where does a queen attend college?

North Carolina State University



What does a queen study?

Agricultural business and management with minors in animal science, crop science, and economics and plans to graduate in May 2020

How long has the queen been involved in the National Junior Hereford Association? 14 years

When did your sights become set on the crown? 2015 in Grand Island, Neb.

Who was your inspiration while running for national queen?

“My Pawpaw Fishel was my inspiration to run for National Hereford Queen. He and my great-grandfather founded our family’s Hereford herd over 100 years ago. He is a true man of faith whose love for the land and passion for raising cattle inspires me every day to strive to be my best and follow my dreams. It is an honor to represent an industry that has played such a vital role in my life.”

What are your goals as the new National Hereford Queen?

“As National Hereford Queen, I hope to represent the heart and heritage of the Hereford breed. We all have our own Hereford story, and I look forward to hearing those stories from breeders and others involved in the industry while attending a plethora of shows, sales and other events across the country. I would like to be a role model to others in the industry just as previous National Hereford Queens were for me.”

What was it like running for queen?

“Running for National Hereford Queen was an incredible experience.

It was a very busy couple of days between the written test, interview, Ladies of the Royal Sale, National Hereford Women meeting, American Royal Show and the American Hereford Association seminars, just to name a few! However, I enjoyed every second of it because I had the opportunity to visit

with fellow Hereford breeders from across the country while gaining new friendships from other state queens.”

What is your biggest takeaway from your experience of running for National Hereford Queen?

“This was actually my second year running for National Hereford Queen. My biggest takeaway was to never give up on your goals. There were a lot of amazing young women who ran both years, so I am very humbled to be chosen to represent the Hereford industry in this capacity.”

Why did you run for National Hereford Queen?

“I truly love communicating with people and sharing my story and about the Hereford breed and how it can improve their herd and lives. The Hereford breed is something that I believe in and will always stand behind. I wanted to serve as National Hereford Queen to advocate for the breeders and leaders in this industry who care about one another and value youth programs as well as research to improve the breed. I want to be the voice for the people and the industry which supports me. The Hereford industry has provided me with numerous opportunities to travel the country and has allowed me to develop valuable life skills, such as public speaking, networking and, most of all, leadership.

“Service is also very important to me and is another reason why I wanted to become the National Hereford Queen. It is inspiring to see the Hereford family band together to support the National Hereford Queen service project every year at the Junior National Hereford Expo. I look forward to the opportunity to use my position to raise awareness and funds for well-deserving organizations.”

What makes the Hereford industry special to you?

“One major factor in the success of Herefords is the quality of people in the industry. In no other organization will you find the family atmosphere that the Herefords have. I have made numerous lifelong friends through



this industry from all corners of the country and even though we are competitive in the showing and in the contest rooms, I know that at the end of the day I can count on my Hereford family for anything.”

What does the National Hereford Queen title mean to you?

“When you are given a crown, you are given a microphone. Being a queen means you take that microphone, with grace and poise, you use it to advocate for what’s important to you. For me, that is the Hereford breed and the beef industry. It is about inspiring others to work hard, do their best, tell their Hereford story and be the kind of role model that others will admire.” **HW**



Melanie with her parents Neil and Karen Fishel.