

# Tell Your Story

by **Emily Meinhardt**, 2019 National Hereford Queen

The opportunity to represent the Hereford breed the past year has been an absolute honor. I want to give thanks to God for the opportunities He has given me along the way, and I also want to thank my family, the McKay family, the National Hereford Women and the American Hereford Association for the support and guidance given to me as I lived out one of my dreams. Attending six national shows and meeting breeders and youth from across the country has given me innumerable stories, experiences and memories. However, the biggest takeaway from my year as the National Hereford Queen is the importance of telling “your story.”

Each one of us is brought to this breed from different experiences, family histories or unique opportunities. Last year when I was running for National Queen, I so badly wanted to be able to tell people I was a third generation Hereford breeder. The reality is ... I'm not — and after a year of reflection, I realize I am okay with that. Now, I am definitely not looking for sympathy, but hear me out on my story, and this will all come full circle.

Growing up, I was heavily involved in 4-H. While I was not associated with a state or national association, I recognized the importance of these programs in youth development. When I was a sophomore in high school, I suddenly lost my boyfriend, Seth McKay, to a tragic car accident. Seth and his family were, and still are, very passionate Hereford breeders. It was always a goal of Seth's for me to be able to show Herefords. Grant, Linda and Bailey gave me the opportunity to show cattle from their herd at local and state shows and then at the junior nationals. They have supported my siblings and me as we have developed as showmen and as our knowledge of the breed and the industry has grown.

While Seth may not have been able to see me show Herefords, it was his strong passion and dedication that led me to be involved with this breed. As I reflect on

my origins within the Hereford breed, that process reminds me there are many who have staked different roots in this amazing Association. While some have deep roots running strongly through many generations of family, others may have newer roots — like mine. Through my experience, I have found this difference is okay. When people used to ask me, “Don't you know so and so?” I used to feel so goofy I did not, but I have found it is okay not to know everyone. We all have to start somewhere.

I have been blessed over the past four years to be welcomed in with open arms to the best breed association in the world. During the past year as the National Hereford Queen, I have tried to embody the tremendous history and heritage of this breed and at the same time to welcome new junior members and opportunities along the way. So, in a time where telling your story in animal agriculture is so important — Tell. Your. Story. **HW**



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