

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

Clark earns the champion senior showman title after years of dedication and preparation.

by *Payton Paschoal*

“Finally,” was the only word that came to mind when Chancee Clark, Muldrow, Okla., was selected as JNHE champion senior showman. Not every showman will relentlessly chase a goal they set over a decade ago, but that is exactly what Clark set out to do during the 2022 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

Adding Herefords to the barn

Clark’s showmanship career began at 5 years old with Maine-Anjou and Chianina cattle. At first, she was hesitant to show Herefords, but she quickly fell in love with the red and white breed. For the last seven years, Clark has immersed herself in everything Hereford.

Having a more diverse background full of different breeds allowed Clark to understand the many facets of the cattle industry and appreciate each breed individually. She also learned to appreciate the people behind the breed.

“I found out it was true what they said about Hereford people. They are easy-going, kind and more of a family,” Clark says.

But just as Clark’s cattle exhibition career has consisted of more than one breed, showmanship is more than a contest to the Clarks. It is the culmination of countless hours spent working and learning long before the show to present each animal to perfection.

“My dad always told us that you can have a good heifer, but you won’t get anywhere if you don’t know how to show it,” she says.

While Clark’s efforts in the barn were reflected in the ring this year, Clark is quick to admit that’s not always the case.

“I’ve walked into the ring with great heifers and had them freak out and make it look like I haven’t worked with them at all,” Clark laughs.



The emotion on Clark’s face says it all after earning top senior showmanship honors.

Showmanship is a partnership, and Clark credits those long hours spent practicing with her show heifer to creating a fantastic showmanship partner.

But it’s not just her showmanship that Clark perfected in the barn; she also learned to clip and fit her own cattle. With the fitting contest kicking off the senior showmanship finals, Clark’s grooming skills gave her a leg up.

Clark recognizes that in the barn there are far fewer female fitters, but she is proud to be one of them.

“I’ve been fitting since I was 7,” Clark says. “My dad and uncle always make me fit with the boys.”

During the fitting portion of the contest, Clark channeled her time in the barn with her family to perform an exemplary fitting job.

Off the halter, when selecting a showmanship heifer, Clark also notes the quality of hair. Should she be chosen for the senior showmanship finals, a Hereford heifer with great hair helps ace the fitting portion of the competition.

Clark found fitting challenging when she first switched from Maine-Anjou and Chianina cattle to Herefords due to a difference in hair. But today, she is armed with an arsenal of tricks to manage Hereford hair — one of her greatest strengths in fitting.

More than a look

Champion senior showman is a long-awaited title for Clark. For years she consistently placed in the top 10, but never garnered a grand or reserve title. But this year, as the judge shook the reserve champion's hand, Clark could not help but throw her hands up with joy.

Having her sisters ringside largely contributed to her joyous moment. Clark says she is incredibly close to her sisters, and the girls spend hours working cattle together. Although working cattle is not always the most glamorous job, Clark says attending JNHE with her sisters makes it worth all the hours of preparation. Clark's love for the cattle industry runs deep. It has allowed her to bond with her family while growing as an individual.

Clark believes that one's work at home reflects in the showring.

"You have to figure out a way to stand out, to not necessarily show yourself off, but you have to figure out a way to stand out from the crowd," Clark says.

“To finally win such a prestigious award and accomplish a goal of mine is something I will never forget.”

— Chancee Clark



Clark couldn't contain her excitement, as she was the last one in the ring to receive a handshake.

Recognizing this fact early on helped develop a unique showmanship style of her own.

In the final drive, judges asked each showman to switch heifers to reveal their strategy when showing an unfamiliar animal. Clark handed off her heifer's halter and approached the show side of the heifer next in line to look over the current presentation. Within a few seconds, Clark assessed the big, bred heifer and took hold of the lead.

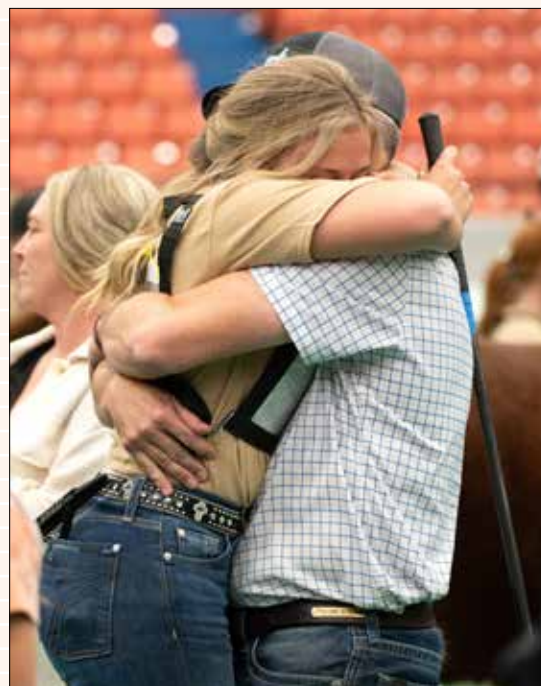
"I quickly noticed her tendency to keep her back legs back, and there was a need to loin her because she gets upright in her pin bones," Clark says.

She could take these quick observations and execute on-the-fly showmanship strategies thanks to the countless hours she spent studying cattle and showring presentation long before JNHE.

Achieving dreams 101

Clark is often asked: *Where did you learn to show like that?*

To which she replies, "Well, my parents taught me feet go this way, but I truly learned from studying showmen I admire in the ring."



Clark and her dad, Jeremy, share a hug after her win.



Clark touches up a tailhead during the fitting portion of senior showmanship finals.



Clark set her goal to win senior showmanship at JNHE more than 10 years ago.



For Clark, showing success involves strategy and hard work at home.

“Showing cattle, showmanship specifically, is all about stepping out of your comfort zone.”

Watching showmanship does not perfectly translate to one’s own performance but when paired with practice, Clark was able to hone her craft.

While Clark’s skills served her well in the senior showmanship finals, she also had luck on her side. Clark has worn the same belt into showmanship competitions since she was 9 years old. It’s her lucky charm. This superstition may sound silly, or it might seem impossible to wear the same belt for a decade, but to Clark it is a reminder of the countless hours poured into the contest and how she has grown.

Clark found a home in the Hereford breed and says she cannot begin to describe her thankfulness for the people who pushed her to do what she loves.

“The number of people you meet at cattle shows and when judging allows you to push beyond your limits, and get to know other people you wouldn’t regularly meet,” Clark says. Showmanship has helped develop her confidence and showcase her unique skillset, despite being self-described as shy and fearful of the spotlight.

Clark says that the only reason she is here today is because of her hard work and dedication to the industry and support of that commitment from family.

Clark looks forward to her next goal, graduating from Oklahoma State University and becoming a labor and delivery nurse in addition to owning her own herd of purebred cattle. **HW**