

HOW LUCKY AM I

LAUREN GATZ REFLECTS ON HER YEAR OF SERVING AS THE 2022 NATIONAL HEREFORD QUEEN.

It is hard to find the words to truly express what an absolute honor it has been to serve the Hereford breed as the National Hereford Queen. Because I grew up in the breed, my passion for our industry started at a young age. Early on, one of my goals was to serve as the National Hereford Queen. That dream becoming reality has been surreal. Looking back, I didn't realize the tremendous impact running for and serving as the National Hereford Queen would have on me and how it would fuel my growth and passion for the breed.

Many of you probably saw the pictures posted on social media, watched it live or viewed the video of my coronation last year. As soon as I heard my name, I burst into tears. At first, these were my least favorite pictures because of how unflattering I thought they looked. But looking back, they are my favorite pictures from that day because they depict the true, raw emotion I was feeling. Little did I know at that moment how truly amazing the year ahead of me would be and how much I would learn. Running for and serving as the National Hereford Queen has been a phenomenal season of growth for me. I grew my



Lauren Gatz and her mom, Jennifer, at the 2022 Cattlemen's Congress. Lauren's mom often traveled with her to national Hereford shows.

knowledge of the breed, self-confidence and connections with Hereford youth and breeders from across the country.

As I approached the American Royal and the end of my reign as the National Hereford Queen, I had an interview with former Oklahoma Hereford Queen, Karstyn Cantrell, for a class project. I

shared with her my experiences serving as queen, my passion for our breed and what the future looks like for me. Throughout my conversation with Karstyn, I realized how incredibly blessed I was to serve our Association in this capacity.

I am sure many of you have heard the saying, "How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." I had many people ask me how I was feeling approaching the end of my journey as the National Hereford Queen. While I am sad that it is over, I have learned so much that I know I will take with me for the rest of my life. This is not the end of my story as an advocate for our breed. I am excited to continue my involvement with an even broader perspective of all that the Hereford breed has to offer.

One of my goals after being crowned was to take every opportunity I was given. During my reign, I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to numerous national shows and see more of our industry. At each event, I was able to connect with fellow Hereford breeders from across the country, and I gained an even deeper understanding of what makes our breed so special. Serving as a role model and advocating for our breed this past year has fueled my passion for the breed and solidified my belief that not only do we raise the best cattle, but we also have the best people.

In conclusion, I want to thank the National Hereford Women and the American Hereford Association for supporting the National Hereford Queen program and making this opportunity possible. I would also like to thank my family and everyone else along the way who supported me throughout this journey. I am excited to continue my involvement in the breed, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to serve as the 2022 National Hereford Queen. **HW**

