

The Showmom AKA “Budgetnista”

by **Cameron Kolinski**



Let’s face it, showing cattle is not cheap. Why do we do it then? The answer is easy — we are raising the next generation of leaders. The children being raised in the livestock industry today will help feed the world in the future, while maintaining American family farm traditions and values. Having been involved in the public education

system for more than six years, I can attest that kids who come through the 4-H and FFA programs are some of the most respectful and the quickest to lend a helping hand. So how do we afford to keep our children involved in the show world? Here are a few tips to help those starting out in the showing or even those who have been involved for years.

Buy a Crock-Pot®. Eating out is expensive! The average combo at any fast-food restaurant is roughly \$12. By utilizing the convenience of a slow cooker, you will ultimately be able to cut down on the cost of food and eating out. Not to mention, the meals will be more wholesome and delicious. One of our favorite meals on the show road is Mississippi pot roast, which takes five minutes to prep and is ready by lunch or dinner, depending on the heat settings. Pinterest can provide you with quick recipes for the Crock-Pot. I highly recommend teaming up with other families at larger shows to meal plan and put those slow cookers to use.

Purchase used equipment. If you’re just getting started, there may be sticker shock over the

price of livestock show supplies. There are so many great products advertised, but it is crucial to set priorities first and obtain the basics. One way to get the equipment you need to start is reaching out to juniors aging out of the show circuit to see if they would be interested in selling their used items. Marketplace and social media pages are another great tool to seek used equipment. Be wary of scammers, though, because they are out there.

Buy quality, not quantity. Assess what you think you will need then research and read the reviews. It’s OK to shop around. There are several companies out there promoting wonderful products. For example, we have a blower in our barn that is 20 years old and still going strong.

One family purchased used equipment until they were confident that the showing was their passion. Then, they purchased one piece of new equipment each year, so they did not stress themselves financially. I recall their first new purchase was upgrading from steel to aluminum panels. After that, they may have purchased a fan the next year and

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so on. This allowed them to budget and upgrade at a slow pace. Remember, taking care of equipment ensures its longevity.

Budget livestock purchases. First and foremost, you must set a budget on how much you are willing to spend on an animal. There are several production sales that offer juniors a discount or credit. These sales will state this information in their sale catalog or advertising. With that being said, it never hurts to ask if you do not see the information stated. Many state farm service agencies offer loan programs for juniors who wish to purchase livestock and/or equipment.

The Virginia Hereford Association (VHA) has an outstanding program called “The Heifer Scholarship Program,” where it awards a heifer at its spring and fall sales to deserving juniors who apply. In short, the junior is to care for the heifer, show her and return the first heifer calf back to the program for future recipients. The VHA has awarded more than eight heifers in just a few short years. I encourage you to reach out to your state association to see if they offer

similar programs or would be interested in developing one.

Dress the part. Dress for success. Does this mean you need to go out and purchase the most expensive name brand of jeans? Absolutely not. When shopping for Western clothing, check out your local farm supply stores as several offer rewards programs for clothing or boot purchases. I also save by shopping end-of-the-season sales, which often include 50-75% discounts. Just buy a size or two larger to allow for your children’s growth over the next year. Some 4-H clubs host a gently used show clothing sale at local shows and even online. Take advantage. If these sales aren’t offered locally, suggest it to your club as a fundraising idea. I am also a firm believer in hand-me-downs.

Plan your shows. While many of us would love to attend every show, sometimes that’s not economically feasible. So, set your priorities. As a family, we start planning for shows a year in advance. I start with a list of county, regional and national shows. There may be a year where you will have to sacrifice attending several local shows to put money toward attending

a national show. This once again goes back to priorities.

While these tips may be basic, they will help save money and allow us moms to continue supporting our families in this industry. As a mom of a future Hereford showman myself, it is important to me to incorporate these tips I have learned throughout the years. I am forever grateful for my mother’s support during my years in the showring, and I look forward to supporting my own son. Moms play a key role in our children’s lives and being able to support them ringside and watch their dreams and goals play out is icing on the cake. **HW**

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