

Labor of Love

Nevada Hereford breeder named 2025 Hereford Herdsman of the Year.

by *Sydnee Shive*

Second-generation Hereford breeder, Kari Brumley, Orovada, Nev., has had a love affair with the bald-faced breed ever since she was old enough to grab the end of a halter and go into the showring. She currently operates Brumley Farms alongside her parents, Don and Skeeter, and her brother, Bryce. She was named the 2025 Hereford Herdsman of the Year at this year's Cattlemen's Congress — the culmination of many years of hard work and a representation of the team behind Brumley Farms.

"Nobody can do this alone," Brumley says. "I am blessed to be called a herdsman, but I don't think that I earned that honor alone."



Kari Brumley, Orovada, Nev., was named the 2025 Hereford Herdsman of the Year. Pictured (l to r) are: Jack Ward, AHA executive vice president; Kari Brumley, 2025 Hereford Herdsman of the Year; Nataleigh Belcher, 2025 National Hereford Queen; and Chad Breeding, AHA Board president.

Born for bald faces

Brumley spent the first 14 years of her life in California before her family purchased their Nevada ranch and moved to the Silver State to expand their hay operation and cow herd. She showed her first Hereford heifer at 7 years old — when her love affair with the breed began — and attended the first official Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE)

in 2000 in Tulsa, Okla. Her sister, Brooke, joined her for the 2001 JNHE in Billings, Mont., and as the saying goes, the rest is history. Brumley hasn't missed one since.

"I can still remember us on our way home. We were like, 'This is what we want to do,'" Brumley says. "We know how much it costs, so we missed out probably on a lot of family vacations, but that was our family vacation."

Brumley is one of the only individuals to claim champion honors in each age division of showmanship at the JNHE: peewee in 2000, junior in 2001, intermediate in 2008 and senior in 2011, a true testament to her innate ability to get a show calf stuck. Her National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) membership and time spent at cattle shows as a young person helped build her foundation.

"We wanted to be involved. We wanted to meet people, and we are a very competitive family, of course, we want to win just as much as everybody else, but to do that, you must have mentors, and you can't ever believe that you're the best," Brumley says. "My parents did a really good job at finding us mentors, and we were able to see cattle from different perspectives and at all stages. I'm also lucky on that front, where I had parents and a sister to work with. We fed off each other, and it gives you that drive and that passion to just want to be successful in this business."



After winning the polled bull show at the 2025 National Western Stock Show, Kari Brumley shares a moment with her Dad, Don.

Behind the arrow F brand

Brumley Farms is located near the base of the Santa Rosa Mountain Range. It's rugged country, where they run about 100 head of registered Hereford cattle and utilize an aggressive embryo transfer and in-vitro fertilization program. Since the beginning, their goal has been to raise sound, functional females that can be successful in a showring, but most importantly, be successful in production. When they moved to Nevada, the 'sound, functional' part became even more important.

"We run cattle on some pretty tough terrain in the high desert. We have very cold winters and hot summers; but we do cool off, and our cows in the summertime run on 1,500 acres. They must be able to travel miles to get to water and feed, so cattle that aren't functional, cattle that aren't sound, cattle that aren't easy-doing, cattle that don't have good mothering ability; they don't make it on our country."

When considering herd additions, the Brumleys have a question they ask themselves: "Will that one make it on the deserts of Nevada?" For instance, their show heifers spend much of their early lives close to home at the show barn but ultimately, they must be able to forge a living on the high desert country.

"We always keep that in mind," Brumley says. "That's always been a goal, being able to have showring presence and meet the demand of what people in the show cattle industry need, but also keeping in mind that there's production cattle, and trying to be diverse and meet everybody's needs."

Cattle and the classroom

Most mornings, depending on the time of year, Brumley helps get things going for the day: whether it be feeding, checking cows close to calving or starting show cattle in the barn, before heading to an elementary school 45 minutes away for her 'day job,' teaching fourth grade. Her time off in the summer lends itself well to caring for a string of show cattle and working on the ranch.

"We do it as a family. Everybody has their separate responsibilities during the day. Then at night, it's kind of the same thing. I help turn out, especially in the summers. My sanctuary is the show barn. I like to be able to come home from work and work in the barn a little bit, help turn out and check on the heifers."

Just as sound and functional cattle are key to their successful cow herd — the Brumley family's collective passion, coordination and dedication make the operation run smoothly day in and day out.

"We all meet as a team and make sure that we have a plan," Brumley says. "We all like to know where everybody's at, what we're doing."

Brumley's students aren't often immersed in agriculture. And, they don't always spend a lot of time traveling. Brumley ensures her students get glimpses of other parts of the U.S. while also learning about agriculture.

"My favorite thing is getting to bring my ranch life to the classroom. I didn't get to be in Denver for this year's junior show. So I came into school and said, 'We're going to have a virtual field trip. We're going to watch a cow show.'" Between the live broadcast of the National Western and her personal insights, Brumley provided her students with a birds-eye-view tour.

Her students adore baby calves and often ask for daily calving updates. Anytime a new calf is born at the ranch, she grabs a photo for her class, helping cultivate their connection to agriculture.

"My passion is teaching," Brumley says. "Even still, I work with a lot of juniors and heifers that we sell. I don't always like that I have to split my responsibilities because I do love the cattle industry so much. I love the Hereford family. But I do like to feed my passion, helping educate youth and share the agriculture industry with others."

At home with Hereford

Since 2000, many cattle have made it to the backdrop with Brumley on the halter and her family and crew behind her. One of the most recent is Stellpflug Gunsmoke 222 ET, the grand champion polled bull at the 2025 National Western Stock Show. While he is undoubtedly a favorite, there are other cattle that come to her

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The success of Brumley Farms is rooted in teamwork. Pictured (l to r) are: John Traini, Madera, Calif.; Brandon Pacheco, Paso Robles, Calif.; Kelsey Traini, Madera, Calif.; Don, Kari and Skeeter Brumley, Orovada, Nev.; Corey Ruff, Orovada, Nev.; and Lydia Shaw, Caldwell, Idaho.

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mind, like Elm Lodge 24 Karat 13K, 'Kay,' a purchase from the Elmhirst family organized with help from auctioneer Dale Stith.

"I actually got to show her in 2001 in Billings. She won her class, and I won junior showmanship with her," Brumley says. "But I think her impact on our operation came after that as a cow. She was the mother of probably the most impactful cow on our operation, which was 'Flirtatious,' who won junior nationals and Denver.

"She won junior nationals in 2008, and she won Denver in 2009. And I can honestly say she probably paid for my college and then some. She was the first national champion that we raised as a family that was able to be extremely successful. I think that's why she was so special to me. And it was funny, I won intermediate showmanship while showing her. That was really sweet."

When it comes to being named Herdsman of the Year, Brumley believes the best herdsmen are lifelong learners with the ability to do almost anything. That includes managing the team that puts in long hours leading up to the event and on show day and working seamlessly alongside others.

"You have to be willing to learn every day, be able to share those responsibilities and trust others, and know that everybody can play a role and work together," Brumley says. "Because I think without being able to do that, it can be pretty lonely."

Winning the award means the world to her.

"I can honestly say it still makes me emotional because in a showing, it's always one person's opinion, and we don't have a say in that," she says. "But to know that my peers and people that I look up to voted for me, that's probably going to be the most humbling moment of my life for sure."

The Hereford family

Brumley credits her work ethic and mentors with making her the herdsman she is today.

"I think that if you put in the hard work and you don't give up, and you're always willing to find mentors, you can be successful and reach the goals that you set," Brumley says. "That's one thing that I've always kept in perspective. And what I equate a lot of my success to, is that I've always worked really hard, and I've looked to mentors and my circle of people that will support me."

Some of her lifelong mentors include the Shaw family in Idaho, Frank and Christina Ward of California, and Nebraska's Denny and Jason Hoffman. From showmanship and ideal phenotype to beef production, there are many who have played a role in Brumley's success.

"I think it's really important that you can learn from a lot of people, but lifelong mentors are always really helpful too; people that can support you no matter what," she says.

Cattle shows are a team sport — and Brumley has a lot of love for her support system, and the Hereford family, too. Bryce and his wife, Tayler, help keep things going on the ranch. Corey Ruff helps manage the show barn, and Brandon Pacheco and John and Kelsey Traini are always on hand with a set of clippers.

Of course, her Mom, Skeeter, and her Dad, Don, are constant, driving forces.

"I do really want to thank my parents for all that they've given up to make sure I've been able to be a part of this industry and have all the opportunities that I have had," Brumley says.

Her straightforward advice for other aspiring herdsmen: "It's never luck. You have to put in the work." **HW**



Kari Brumley leads 2025 Cattlemen's Congress polled senior bull champion and eventual 2025 National Western Stock Show grand champion polled bull, Stellpflug Guns smoke 222 ET, into the showing.