



Continuous Connection

The new Meet-Up - Powered by Sure Champ® cultivates community mentorship.

“I was 15 when I first participated in the Pen-to-Pen program just to meet new people while at the VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE). I was extremely nervous at first, but once the program began, I was hooked,” says Logan McFatrige, National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) chairman. “Pen-to-Pen has always been one of my favorite events each year, and I always look forward to seeing my pen pals at the JNHE. Since that first time, I haven’t missed one. This has allowed me to gain friendships that I know will last a lifetime. Membership has always been something I have been extremely passionate about, and it all started from the first time I joined Pen-to-Pen. While being on the NJHA board of directors, I have helped

manage the event, fostering these connections with other junior members and now growing the partnership with industry leaders.”

Now, Pen-to-Pen has evolved into the new Meet-Up - Powered by Sure Champ®, providing NJHA members with more opportunities to connect and grow, as they themselves have evolved over time.

“The members you have today are not the same as they were five years ago,” explains Cheryl Mitchell, a transformational keynote speaker and leadership training consultant.

By that Mitchell means a 12-year-old NJHA member today, for instance, is not the same as a 12-year-old member five years ago; they speak a different language and communicate differently. She explains much of

the change is attributed to the lack of one-on-one-interaction borne by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mitchell first was involved with the NJHA at the 2022 Faces of Leadership Conference. Since then, she has continued consulting with the NJHA board about leadership training. Her first Pen-to-Pen was in 2023.

As with Pen-to-Pen, connection and networking remain central to the Meet-Up. Mitchell explains Meet-Ups will include intentional activities focused on juniors interacting with each other — one-on-one — while participating in fun activities.

“Getting to know about someone while having fun, those are the things you remember,” Mitchell says.

More opportunity, more often

Mitchell explains Pen-to-Pen was designed originally as a one-on-one mentorship program, pairing older NJHA members with younger ones, meeting at the JNHE and then continuing engagement as pen pals.

Rather than an annual event, Mitchell explains Meet-Ups will provide an ongoing conversation as NJHA members attend various Meet-Ups throughout the year (see Meet-Up Schedule). No two will be alike, including the mix of participants and specific activities. Common to all, however, will be connection, leadership development and



The first NJHA Meet-Up - Powered by Sure Champ® was hosted at HRC Feed Yards LLC in Scott City, Kan., during the 2025 Fed Steer Shootout Field Day.



community mentorship. Hereford is already a family, of course, but think of your own family get together. It's great to visit with aunts and uncles, but chances are you spend more time with cousins who speak the same language.

Mitchell emphasizes the Meet-Up is designed to serve as a leadership development pipeline for both NJHA and the American Hereford Association (AHA). "We want to help participants develop a differentiated skillset, so that when someone knows you're associated with NJHA, they know you have skills others don't have at the same age," she explains.

“All you have to do is show up to one of these events and jump in head-first with enthusiasm.”

— Logan McFtridge, NJHA chairman

Pen-to-Pen at last year's JNHE attracted more than 200 junior members from across the country each day of the two-day program.

"We want to bring these same leadership and connection-based activities to as many NJHA members as possible," McFtridge says. "If you are a member looking to get involved, this is the perfect opportunity to make connections in our breed and within the livestock industry. No matter your age, we welcome everyone, whether it be during an NJHA Meet-Up hosted at the JNHE, or one of our Meet-Ups at other events throughout the year.

"All you have to do is show up to one of these events and jump in head-first with enthusiasm. Information about the different NJHA Meet-Ups will continue being shared on social media and in other NJHA marketing materials as we lead up to our capstone event of

SURE•CHAMP Meet-Up Schedule

Maryland State Show, May 3, Gaithersburg, Md.

Southeast Regional Hereford Show, June 21, Fletcher, N.C.

"Live from Louisville" VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo, July 13-14, Louisville, Ky.

Western States Hereford Show, Dec. 4, 2025, Reno, Nev.

Cattlemen's Congress, Jan. 7, 2026, Oklahoma City, Okla. **HW**

the year at the JNHE. Don't miss out on the chance to make some lifelong friends for the future."

Closing the support loop

McFtridge explains the new Meet-Up also provides the opportunity to further strengthen NJHA's long-standing relationship with VitaFerm and Sure Champ — longtime JNHE supporters — while underscoring the connection between them and their parent company, BioZyme® Inc.

"VitaFerm and Sure Champ have always been huge supporters of the JNHE and have been our title sponsor for years. Instead of the Sure Champ Prep to Win Workshop happening alongside the NJHA Meet-Up events, the second day of the NJHA Meet-Up will continue building on our connections and integrate with the Sure Champ activities," McFtridge explains.

"Working with our title sponsor enables us to connect our members with more industry leaders, while also giving juniors an opportunity to learn more about nutrition and the Hereford breed."

Amy Cowan, AHA director of youth activities and foundation, adds that the ongoing generosity of BioZyme and its affiliate companies enables building and evolving programs over time, leveraging benefits for NJHA members.

"Continued sponsorships by VitaFerm and Sure Champ, as well as support from numerous others through the Hereford Youth Foundation of America provide NJHA members matchless opportunity," Cowan says. "We're grateful and excited to add the Meet-Up - Powered by Sure Champ to this list of opportunities." **HW**



While no two events will be alike, all the Meet-Ups include intentional programming focused on juniors interacting with each other — one-on-one — and fun activities.