

Information that Lasts

Juniors gain lifelong industry knowledge by competing in skill-a-thon contest.

by Madi Baughman, editorial intern

“How many issues of the *Angus Journal* are dispersed each year?”

This is one of many questions

junior members answered to test their industry knowledge in the skill-a-thon contest at the 2020 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) July 19-25 hosted in Tulsa, Okla.

Offering junior, intermediate and senior divisions, members can participate in

this contest from their first NJAS to their last one. The skill-a-thon contest covers several different topics in the beef cattle industry: breed identification, meat identification, equipment identification, feedstuff identification, Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) and the American Angus Association.

Upon entering the contest room, junior members from each division rotate through stations pertaining to the different industry topics in order to test their knowledge. These stations included photos of Angus officials, meat and breed identification photos, a chart of

carcass cuts, and a feed identification portion with different feedstuffs in clear jars. Though junior to senior

divisions answer the same type of questions, the difficulty increases as they get older and more advanced.

To allow for proper social-distancing measures, members had four-hour time slots on two different days where they could come

take the test, and participants were recommended to wear masks in the contest room. At the conclusion of the two days, Association staff tabulated the scores and utilized tiebreaker questions if needed to come to a top three in each division.

A wealth of knowledge

Because junior members are working, feeding and raising cattle on a daily basis, Madeline Bauer, American Angus Association events coordinator, says it's extremely important for them

to understand how to safely work with cattle as well as understand the factors that go into making production decisions for their herd.

Bauer says juniors can gain confidence in what they know about the beef cattle industry and the cattle they raise through this contest.

Kacy Bland, events and education intern, says while juniors might not know the correct answer to every question, this contest is a great way of encouraging a growing curiosity about different areas and scenarios. Bland hopes juniors will

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Participants grow their beef industry knowledge through the skill-a-thon contest.

be encouraged to seek answers to the questions they didn't know, allowing them to continue to build their comprehension of the industry.

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Confidence in their skills

Earning first place in the senior division, Rylie Philipello of Bryan, Texas, says she came to NJAS to partake in the contest even though she did not exhibit cattle. The skill-a-thon contest allowed her to learn about the beef industry then put that proficiency to practice, she adds.

"I learned a lot about the Angus breed because I did a lot of research on the website," Philipello says. "I definitely feel like I've been able to do more in my own herd because I know more about every aspect in the industry."

First-year NJAS attendee Cooper Murnin from Huntley, Mont., says his favorite part of the contest is the breed identification portion as well as the questions about the Association. After earning first place in the junior division, he says he will continue participating in the contest because of the information he learned about the Angus breed.

Cooper's mother, Julie Murnin,



Junior division contestants (above) study the different beef cattle breeds to identify. This participant (right) ponders the answer to one of the multiple beef industry questions.

says his sister Claire, who has competed in the skill-a-thon contest every year, is the one who initially encouraged him to participate in the contest. Murnin says she enjoyed the real-life skills her children learned through this experience as well as giving them a common goal to bond over.

"It was fun to hear how he talked about it after the contest," Murnin says. "It's cool when you hear your 12-year-old and 9-year-old talking about proper needle-handling procedure."

At the end of the day, Bauer says providing educational opportunities to grow in their understanding of the breed and industry they love is a great experience to offer junior members from a young age.



"The more they know about the cattle they raise, the more they know how to communicate with the consumers they serve," Bauer says. "It really comes full circle, which is another reason why the skill-a-thon is an invaluable contest to provide to juniors. It makes them better cattlemen in the end." AJ