

EAST BOUND AND DOWN

California and Nevada juniors travel together to the 2022 NJAS.

by Faye Smith, editorial intern

Over the river and through the woods, to junior nationals they go.

National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members across the nation embarked on journeys ranging in time and miles spent in the truck and trailer. Although Kansas City, Mo., is one of the central locations for the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), members from eastern and western states had to find innovative ways to attend “The Biggest Show on Dirt.”

Grace Tekansik, Minden, Nev., attended her first NJAS in 2021 and was anxious to attend again this year. She was, however, weighing both the pros and cons of hauling one heifer 1,600 miles.

“Fuel back home is around \$5 per

gallon. It wasn't very logical for my heifer to go that far and have a 25-foot trailer to herself,” Tekansik says.

At first, her travel plans involved driving to Colorado to meet a family and carpool the rest of the way through to Kansas City. Then after speaking to the California Junior Angus Association (CJAA) advisors, Tekansik found an easier way to the heart of America.

“California is a smaller association, so everybody knows everyone. Grace had expressed interest in wanting to come, but it's a lot to come out here, especially being so far away. We offered to take her since she is from Nevada and is a part of the California association,” says Sydney Franks, California Junior Angus Association member from Grass Valley, Calif. “It's just what you do. You help people, other people help you.”

The Franks family loaded their cattle at home June 30 and picked up Tekansik's heifer along the way in a Cabela's parking lot in Reno, Nev. The family took four head in total to Rock Springs, Wyo., where they had a

layover for the night. Tekansik and her mother woke up to fly to Kansas City the next morning.

Stopping throughout the drive was essential to keep cattle cool and calm on the path to NJAS. The Franks mapped out four stops, where they would water and feed cattle. Truck stops and gas stations served as good locations to pull over to care for the livestock.

Twelve hours into the drive from Wyoming, with twelve more to go to Missouri, the Franks realized their drive would not be as easy as they had originally planned.

“We were following our family friends for the drive, and we had a tire go out, which was very exciting,” Franks says. “We also had some trouble codes thrown on the truck. It wasn't the easiest trip ever, but it was fun.”

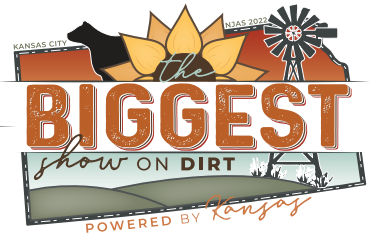
Arriving to the American Royal Complex at 11 p.m., Tekansik met the Franks to finally unload the cattle and tack. The two families arrived at the Airbnb at 2 a.m. the next morning, ready for a night's rest before taking on the week of NJAS.



**Sydney Franks,
Grace Tekansik**



NATIONAL JUNIOR ANGUS SHOW



The extra family member

Keeping a regular routine is important for cattle attending a show. Since Tekansik and Franks stalled together, they both were able to help each other during the day when it came to washing, feeding and general care of the animals.

“Grace has been a godsend to our family. She’s always there whenever you need her. We don’t have to ask her for anything and she’s always helping when she can,” Franks says.

Both Tekansik and Franks were active in several contests throughout the week, and served as voting delegates. Tekansik says she appreciates the opportunity to travel with Franks as it helped the entire state association grow closer as a family.


“It’s hard to know what the experience of this is if you’ve never been here. Why not bring another person? It’s an experience that is always worth it.” — Franks

“My favorite part is having complete and total trust in the Franks, knowing that everything’s going to be how it’s supposed to be,” Tekansik says. “We just kind of get to be more of a family, instead of each individual family as their own.”

Coming home, the Tekansiks loaded up on a plane home to meet the Franks. In the truck and trailer, the Franks drove through day and night nonstop to get home — a 25-hour trip, with stops only to fill up on gas and water cattle.

Although their trip was not conventional, both Franks and

Tekansik agree they would travel with a carpool group for future shows to come.

“I think anybody who’s been to junior nationals knows that it’s so worth coming here. Especially as somebody from California, I think that there’s like kind of a disconnect being so far away from the centralized Midwest,” Franks says. “It’s hard to know what the experience of this is if you’ve never been here. Why not bring another person? It’s an experience that is always worth it.” 

South Dakota

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