

A Sweeping Success

Herdsmanship competition teaches value of teamwork, pride and marketing.

by Brooke Byrd

An animatronic alligator, a giant bed and moonings for sale were on display July 12-17 for visitors to the 2004 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Kansas City, Mo. All were part of displays by states

vying for the top herdsmanship awards, for which judging was done Wednesday through Friday of the NJAS.

The NJAA Best State Herdsmanship Contest is meant to “encourage cooperation, fellowship and teamwork” among juniors

within states, says James Fisher, director of activities and junior activities for the American Angus Association. “It also promotes pride and enthusiasm for the state junior organizations and rewards those organizations that achieve this purpose.”

Despite the abundance of free food, educational materials and promotional displays, emphasis in scoring is actually placed more on the cleanliness of the aisles and bedding, the appearance of the animals, and the juniors themselves. But, participants and judges say herdsmanship offers much more than just another NJAS competition.

Judge Adam Graven, Katy, Texas, says herdsmanship contests show the work that leads up to the show and brings to focus the most important aspects of exhibiting cattle.

“Showing is more than having an animal at the end of a halter. Accomplished herdsmen know that 95% of the work is done at home,” Graven says. “Herdsmanship is not about having the best animal, but how well one exhibits the animal and presents himself to others.”

Similarly, exhibitor Jacob Wolfrey, Frederick, Md., says that the herdsmanship contest “shows who knows their stuff, who knows what they’re doing, and who takes care of their stuff.”

It’s a chance to get all juniors involved in a show, instead of “just sitting around and doing nothing,” adds Kerri McMahon, Fort Smith, Ark.

NJAS herdsmanship judge Erin Worrell, Austin, Texas, says herdsmanship is “an opportunity for junior exhibitors to build character and gain recognition outside of the showing.”

Go team

Most agree that herdsmanship contests promote teamwork. “They encourage cooperation and provide the opportunity for youth to develop teamwork skills,” Worrell says. “It takes a team to win the herdsman contest; one person can’t win it for everyone else in the state.”

Worrell says she was impressed by the level of teamwork and sharing of responsibility she saw in Kansas City. “I saw the youngest exhibitors working together with older



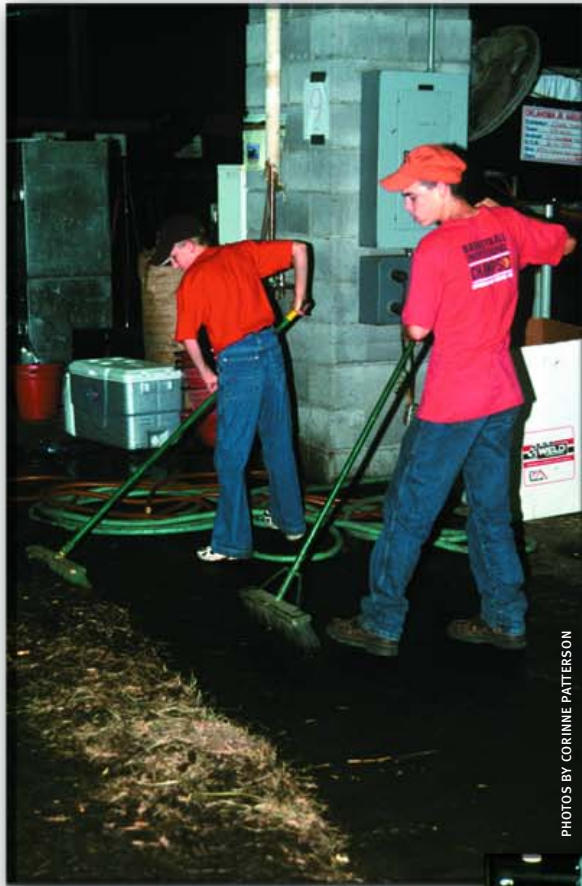
PHOTO BY BROOKE BYRD

► Junior Angus members from Wisconsin work together to promote their state association. Herdsmanship contests build valuable teamwork skills and provide great experiences and fun for juniors.



PHOTO BY ALAINA BURT

► South Dakota Angus exhibitors work on keeping their cattle clean while in the stalls. Herdsmanship promotes important marketing skills, as it highlights the need to provide a good first impression and a welcoming environment.



PHOTOS BY CORINNE PATTERSON



▶ **Above:** The West Virginia Junior Angus Association uses its display to show that Angus breeders have plenty of positive things on which to focus to help them sleep well at night. Many state groups use their displays to promote their own state associations, members or the beef industry in general.

▶ **Left:** Juniors worked together to keep their aisles, bedding and cattle clean during the NJAS. State groups were judged twice each day, Wednesday through Friday, with emphasis placed on the cleanliness of the aisles and bedding, the appearance of the animals, and the juniors themselves.

▶ **Below:** The Arkansas Junior Angus Association started with the 2004 NJAS theme, "Angus and All That Jazz," and tailored it to create an individual display. Even though the displays only counted for 10% of the total score, many junior members went all-out.

exhibitors to fill water buckets, sweep aisles, clean bedding and groom cattle," she says.

Teamwork is what the herdsmanship competition and the NJAS are all about, says exhibitor Kara Wilson, Orleans, Ind. "It's not your regular county fair open show; it's something that really encourages teamwork among the states. You have to work together, and herdsmanship is something that really entices that."

A crucial part of herdsmanship is lending a hand when needed. "It shows you all come together and help each other out," Wolfrey says. "If somebody leaves, then somebody watches their cattle and takes care. There's somebody always here to watch things."

Wilson also stresses the importance of helping each other. "One of the main things that we try and stress is . . . getting people to work together," she says. "It's all hands on deck; it's not just you taking care of yourself. Get up and sweep the aisles; blow off somebody else's calf if it gets up."

The real world

Both judges and exhibitors agree that the lessons learned from herdsmanship contests carry over into marketing, as well as career and personal development. One way in which they do that is by providing a huge source of pride, both for state organizations and for Angus cattle.



"Taking pride in what you're doing, working your hardest no matter what you do — that's going to carry over, whether it's with cattle, a job interview or a job that you've worked at for 15 years," Wilson says.

Whitney Simmons, Franklin, W.Va., says, "It's important because it shows pride within your state, and it shows that you care for your animals and you're proud of everything that you have."

A big part of this pride includes the displays, which usually combine promotions

for the different states with beef or Angus promotions. Most also tie into the overall theme of the NJAS. While some states promote their associations, some exhibit what their states have to offer. "It gives you a chance to compete in another way against other states," Simmons says, adding that the states try to outdo each other. "It's a big competition here."

Indiana chose to promote its own junior members and association.

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"We decided to do little biographies of all the people who were planning on coming to nationals, because we had a lot of new kids, and we felt that was a way to get them involved," Wilson says, adding that it was also meant to help people from other states put names with faces and to showcase members.

Colorado juniors turned their display into a fund-raiser, offering signs showing a cow jumping over a moon and saying, "You've been mooned" for \$15 apiece. "We're promoting friendships that you can have with the association and the national show," says Britney Creamer, Montrose Colo., explaining the signs could be sent to a friend or family member.

West Virginia chose to promote the beef

industry, especially Angus breeders, by showcasing a giant bed with "Angus breeders are sleepin' easy; we're readin' good news" written on it. Simmons says the inspiration behind the display was the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in the United States.

"We were showing how Angus breeders were reading good news," she says. "It's a cute little funny thing that says Angus breeders are sleeping easy because they have the good maternal instincts and largest junior association. There's so many good things that they're not going to bed worrying if their herds will be around tomorrow and what problems they'll be facing tomorrow."

While judging, Worrell says that she was very impressed with the displays. "Packing and planning for the NJAS is a huge undertaking, but to plan and pack a state display is going the extra mile," she says. "My favorite state display was Florida; they did a fabulous job promoting the environment, culture and commodities Florida has to offer.

"It was great to see how the states

incorporated the theme of the show into their displays and signs," she adds. For example, Arkansas used a "Cowboy Jazz" theme.

"We just got on the Internet and typed in 'jazz,'" McMahon explains. "We found they had music from a long time ago called 'cowboy jazz.'"

First impressions

Besides promoting states, beef and Angus, herdsman contests provide valuable experience in marketing yourself and your product. However, such experience all starts in one place.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," Graven says. "That's how you capture and retain customers — or lose them. You want to keep that good impression in the customer's mind."

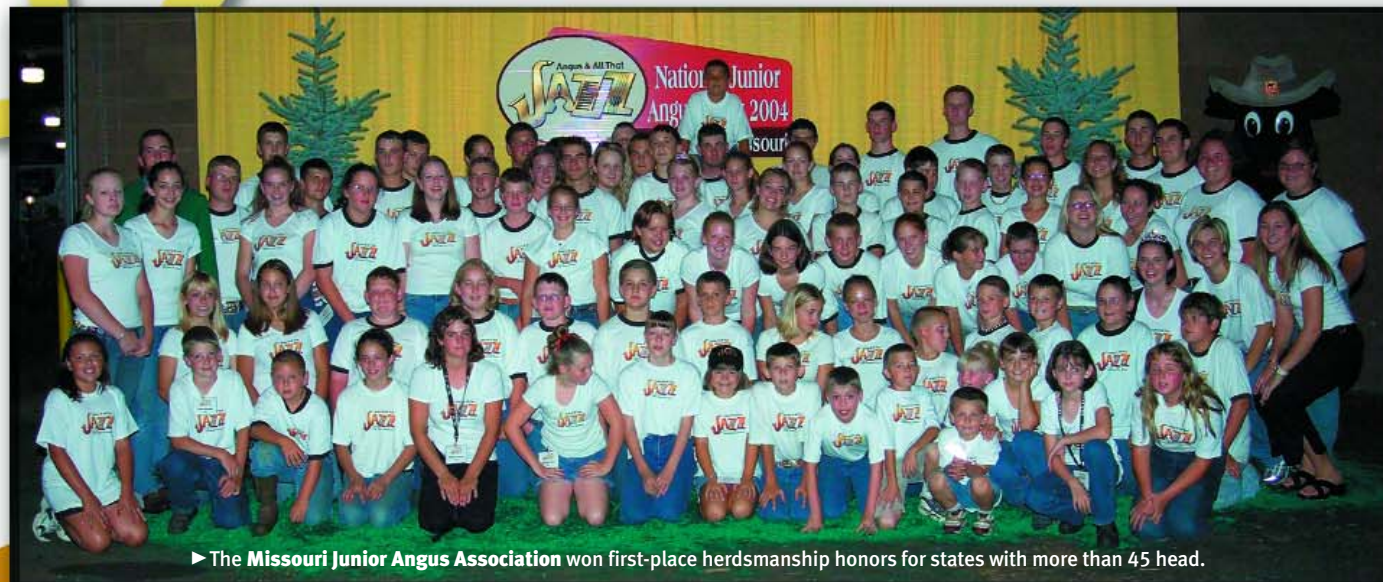
Worrell agrees. "You can give a first impression of your cattle and your breeding program to a new buyer through the appearance and display of cattle at a show or home," she says. "A cattle show — the NJAS or any other — provides opportunity to



► The Louisiana Junior Angus Association won first-place herdsman honors for states with 15 head or fewer.



► The Virginia Junior Angus Association won first-place herdsman honors for states with 16-30 head.



► The Missouri Junior Angus Association won first-place herdsman honors for states with more than 45 head.

reach potential buyers, many of whom you've never met, and their first impressions of the appearance and cleanliness of your aisle and cattle can go a long way in marketing your cattle and program."

Just as important as providing a good first impression is providing a good lasting impression, Worrell says, emphasizing that herdsmanship judging continues for three days at the NJAS. "The time and commitment it takes to keep a work area and tasks orderly and organized leaves a lasting impression."

Exhibitors agree the contest teaches marketing skills.

"I think it teaches you how to take care of everything, to be more responsible and to be a better salesperson," McMahon says.

Creamer adds, "If you have a clean area, and a comfortable place for people to be, they'll come and visit you and give you a chance to market cattle to them."

The contest also teaches juniors how to market themselves, and gives them qualities they can use.

"It's all about learning to leverage your product and abilities by presenting both in



► The Ohio Junior Angus Association won first-place herdsmanship honors for states with 31-45 head.

the best possible light, while making as few mistakes as possible," Graven says. "This type of competition develops project- and time-management skills. It also places significance on attitude; how it can help or hurt you."

The attitude of those involved plays a big role in herdsmanship success, Wilson says. "You can walk through a stall and tell if people are having a good time, if they're making you feel welcome. We're really going to try to encourage our members to get along and make everyone that comes to the Indiana stalls feel real welcome."

Herdsmanship contests reward a good work ethic and a positive attitude, Graven says. "These are core lessons for success in anything one does, personally and professionally."

Whether exhibitors were enjoying themselves was one of the main things Worrell says she noticed.

"So many of the kids seemed to be having a good time with one another. Whether it was sweeping aisles or playing cards on the showbox, you could certainly pick out the

exhibitors who were having a good time," she says. "That's one of the best things about the NJAA — the chance to build life skills while still having fun."

Most important, Graven says, is the understanding and learning that come from such a competition. "It teaches us that it's not about winning or losing, but how you prepare and what you learn," he says. "Above all, they learn that it is a process; and, if we adults do our job, kids will learn that this type of competition is part of a journey, not an end." **AJ**