



# Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

## Preparation is key

*As this issue arrives in your mailbox, juniors planning to attend the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Grand Island, Neb., will have slightly less than two months to finish preparing for the July 3-9 event. That time will pass quickly, so make the most of it to ensure a successful outing.*

### Experience

If you are going to show a heifer, steer or bull, that will obviously take the most preparation. Hopefully you've already gentled and trained your animal to a halter. If not, you'd better get with it. The last thing anybody wants is for an animal to hurt someone or itself at the show because it wasn't properly trained prior to arrival.

It's important to condition the animal to things it will encounter on the trip so it won't react poorly. Playing the radio in the barn can accustom your showstring to the noise of people talking. Run the fans you'll use at the show. Use the blower at home. Groom your animals at home like you will groom them to go into the ring at the NJAS, giving your show animal experience with all the smells and sounds they'll encounter on show day.

One of the easiest things to forget is to use a show halter with its rattling chain at home a couple of times. The chain can be unnerving to the animal on first use. If it pulls back to the point it hurts with a dozen other heifers

in the ring and a ringside full of people, getting away to find a safe spot to figure it all out may become your animal's first priority. At home, you can leave the rope halter on for control until your animal gets used to the noise and feel of the chain.

Likewise, using a showstick for the first time at a show can be a recipe for disaster. Instead, accustom your show animal to the stick at home in a familiar setting where you have time to let your animal smell the showstick and realize it can be a tool to scratch an itch. Those using the round-penning method to gentle their calves may use a showstick to scratch them before they even put on a halter. In the ring at the NJAS, it will have a calming effect rather than add to the newness of the show environment and become something awkward to trip over.

There's nothing like a trial run at a preview show, local fair or even a get-together with



other showmen from your area to prepare you and your calves for the trip to the national stage. Do you have your showbox cleaned out? Have you restocked the supplies you'll need? Do you have the right amount of feed? Is your equipment working? Do you understand the basic procedures for leading your animal and setting them up in the ring at the ringman's instruction? Did your animal react well to the experience?

With two months to the show, are your show calves on a nutritional plane that will have them at their peak on show day? If not, how do you need to adjust?

What about health papers? Is your trailer road-ready? Are you traveling with others? If so, are your plans in synch? If you're traveling from a great distance, have you arranged for a stop and a place to let the cattle out for a break from the trailer?

A Google search for "tips for showing cattle" will bring up several handy references, including a couple of YouTube videos by Angus TV. There's nothing like preparation to make you and your animals feel at home at the show so you can get the most out of the event. You can also check out many articles in last September's *Angus Journal* for tips of the trade.

By the way, while you're practicing, don't forget to snap a couple of pictures to enter in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA)/*Angus Journal* Photo Contest. That deadline is May 15.

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## Angus Journal

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