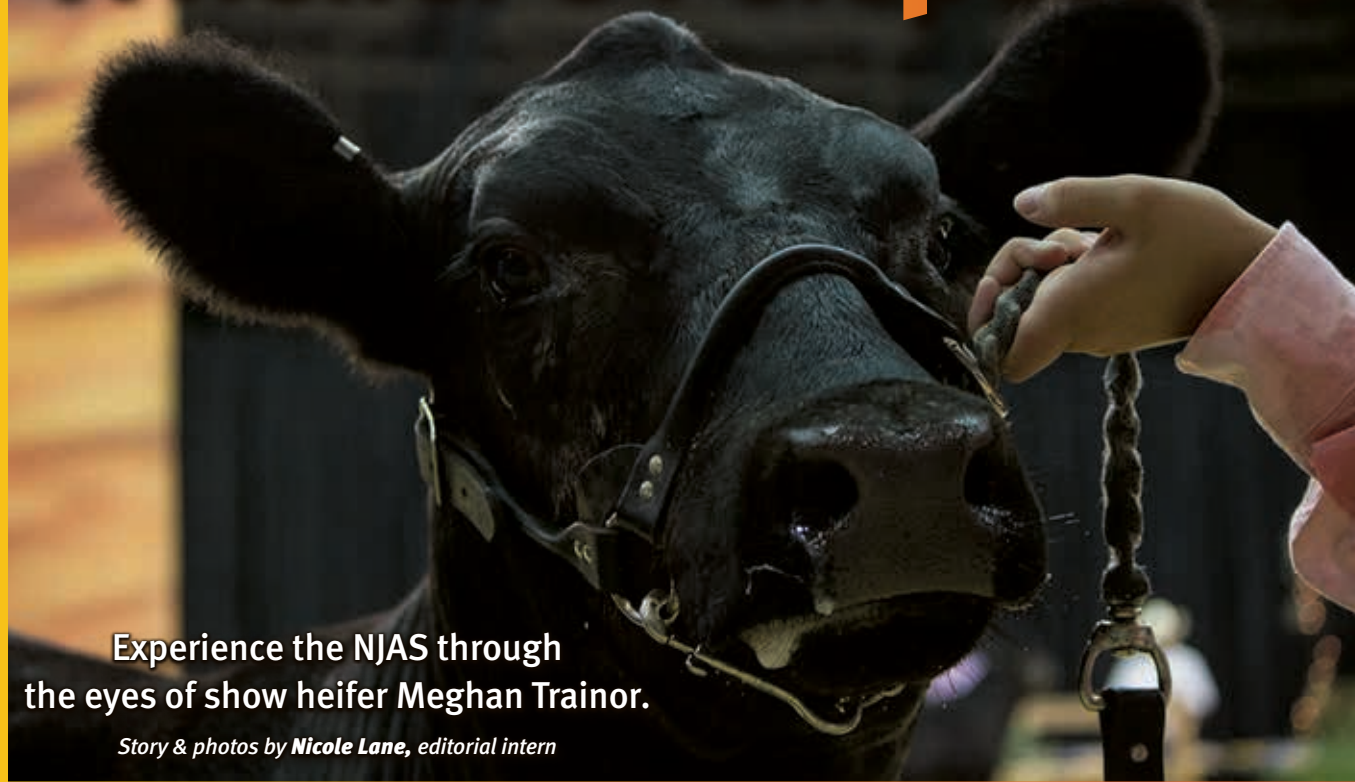


# A Heifer's Perspective



Experience the NJAS through the eyes of show heifer Meghan Trainor.

Story & photos by *Nicole Lane*, editorial intern

Tulsa was *hot*. For this show heifer, who is accustomed to the rolling hills, grass and the showbarn in Kentucky, it was quite an adjustment to spend a week in the heat of Oklahoma for the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). However, it was worth it, because I was there to get in the showing with my girl, Catherine Cowles, a National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) member who resides with me at Pleasant Hill Farms in Rockfield, Ky.

I'm Meghan Trainor, a November Angus heifer with what some people might say is an attitude. Originally I hail from Champion Hill Farms in Ohio, but when I stepped off the trailer at Pleasant Hill and saw that 14-year-old girl with blonde hair and the sweetest Kentucky accent you've ever heard, I knew I had found my home.

I live for being in the showing. I can honestly say I was born and bred for this. I know how to strut my stuff for the judge, set up just right and perk my ears perfectly. Of course, I have the best partner out there. Once I am sitting pretty she scratches me on my brisket (not my belly mind you, I'm not one of those heifers), and I am in heaven.

## Backdrop ready

It's not just the showing that I love, but the entire process of showing. I mean, what girl doesn't love to be pampered? At home, every day I head into the gray barn to be rinsed while we jam out to at least three songs (to get me nice and cool). In fact, that's how I got my name.

Standing in the washracks, my head was bobbing along to Meghan Trainor's "Dear Future Husband." It's one of my favorites. That's when Catherine turned to her brother Corbin and said, "What if we call her M.T.?" He gave her a crazy look asking what she meant. Obviously, she meant Meghan Trainor, one of the best pop singers alive. He wasn't too crazy about the idea, but after some discussion (while I continued to enjoy my bath and rock out), Catherine, sister Caroline and Corbin decided Meghan fit me just right.

Following my bath every morning, the jam session continues while my hair gets done with the biggest hairdryer you've ever seen. Once I've got my blowout,

we practice for the ring, and then I get to hang out in the barn like I would if we were at a show. The fans are blowing the air through my pretty black coat, and I relax and chew my cud, content as can be.

At the show, I am patient while I get clipped, fit, combed and sprayed. I know it's important to look my best once we step onto those shavings. Catherine's favorite part is balling my tail because she loves my natural



► "Everybody says that man's best friend is a dog, but obviously whoever says that has never owned a heifer," says Catherine Cowles.

curls. I have one of the waviest tails she's ever seen. After it's balled, I switch my tail back and forth, happy to be all dolled up with my best friend for the ring.

### Center stage

As we approach the ring I know it's time for business. She doesn't have to say anything, but I can feel the nervous energy coming from the girl at my side. We are both intense, game faces on, because this is a national show and the competition is fierce. I don't know what's coming, but I trust Catherine and let her lead the way while I follow, ready to give it all we've got.

There are lots of lights, cameras and a microphone turned up so loud it makes my ears hurt. I pretend it doesn't bother me because we are focused on the man in the middle of the ring in the tan cowboy hat. We stop, and I set up. She scratches my brisket, and I begin to relax and close my eyes. When I feel her blowing on my nose, my ears immediately perk forward. I'm awake, attentive and my curly tail shifts back and forth.

She's sweating, scratching, leading; and I'm walking, stopping, posing. Like a diva on center stage I strut around the ring again and again until we're stopped. Lined up against the rail, there are girls to my right, but none to my left. We've been sorted, fifth in the class. Not the best, but not too shabby. No banner today, but she leaves the ring with a ribbon, and I leave with a new feed pan.

I stop for a photo, and then we head to the washracks, ready for some girl time and a cool rinse. She lets me



► The washracks are where memories are made — and the only place I can remember feeling cool in Tulsa.



► She talks and I listen as we prepare to enter the NJAS showing.

all ears. They are big, black and fuzzy, but they will always listen to whatever joys or heartaches my showgirl has to tell me. She'll tell you that I'm a special show calf, but the truth is, she's the one that's extraordinary.

Her two passions are cattle and basketball. Often we'll be at a show and she'll change directly from show clothes to gym clothes, moving smoothly from the showing to the basketball court. I've never seen her play, for some reason they never bring me to the place they call their second home, the gym, but I hear she's quite talented.

At NJAS she competed in the Cook-Off, the judging contest and quiz bowl. She's smart, a great showman and she loves me, her family, Kentucky basketball and the Lord. She'll tell you she is lucky to have an animal like me as her partner, but really, I'm just happy to have her.

On average, Catherine travels to about 15 shows a year and that means I get to go, too. Not all cattle like leaving the ranch, but we both love going somewhere new. I mean, how many other cattle get to see so much of the world? The show heifer life is definitely great. I load right up into the trailer, ready for whatever adventure we will go on next.

I'm still young and so is Catherine. Together we've got lots of shows, memories and successes to look forward to for the future of this perfect team, a girl and her show heifer.



► Catherine and I, in our element, are the perfect team in the showing.

know I did just fine by playing with my ears and scratching my face just the way I like it.

Since moving to Kentucky, I've made some great friends out in the pasture, but the best of all is my girl Catherine. She'll tell you, "Everybody says that man's best friend is a dog, but obviously whoever says that has never owned cattle."

### A special bond

Of course the girl has great human friends — how could she not, when there's so many great people to meet at cattle shows — but it's pretty hard to beat friends that come from a barn. I know I might be biased, but it's the truth when I tell you I'm

