

By taking the proper precautions and being prepared, each journey to a show can be an enjoyable one.

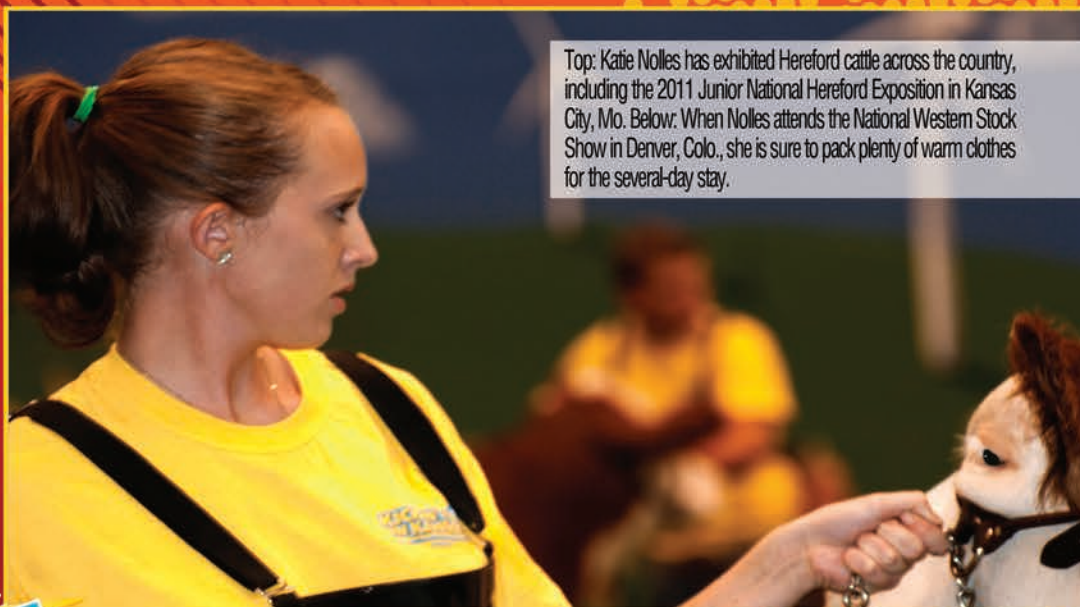


by CHRISTY COUCH LEE

## enjoy the JOURNEY

For many youth in the livestock industry, there's nothing more exciting than heading to a livestock show. It's not just about the show – it's about the journey of getting there.

Lexi Marek, Washington, Iowa, and Katie Nolles, Bassett, Neb., say the journey is more than loading up their showbox and pulling out of the drive. It's a matter of careful planning, attention to the health of their animals, and working together with their families. And this working together helps things go off without a hitch.



Top: Katie Nolles has exhibited Hereford cattle across the country, including the 2011 Junior National Hereford Exposition in Kansas City, Mo. Below: When Nolles attends the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colo., she is sure to pack plenty of warm clothes for the several-day stay.



Royal and Fort Worth Stock Show, in addition to numerous state and local shows.

A freshman at Rock County High School in Bassett, Nolles is active in FFA, 4-H, theatre and track. She also serves as a board member of the Nebraska Junior Hereford Association.

### *getting their starts*

Marek has been raised on her family's 120-sow showpig and 150-cow cattle operation with her parents and three younger sisters. She began showing hogs and heifers at a county and national level at the age of 5.

She is involved in many activities, including FFA, 4-H, 4-H county council and dance team, and she serves as the Iowa state reporter for the Business Professionals of America.

Marek estimates she misses about 20 days of school each year for livestock shows, attending the county and state fairs, Ak-Sar-Ben, American Royal, World Pork Expo, National Junior Summer Spectacular, and many other shows throughout the year.

Nolles has been showing cattle since she was 11, and has been competing nationally through the National Junior Hereford Association for five years. Today, she competes in five or more national shows annually, including the Junior National Hereford Exposition, National Western Stock Show, American

When it comes time for these girls to head to a show, their top priority is packing the showbox.

### *thinking inside the box*

Marek says, in order to make packing easier, the family's large showbox remains in the trailer at all times.

"I keep that one packed with towels, the hose, feed additives, and all we need for the show," she says. "Then, we take our hanging box into the barn, which has the soap and brushes we use every day. When we load the pigs before we leave for a show, we load that box back into the trailer."

The Nolles family likes to work ahead. They begin packing the showbox and trailer a week to 10 days before a show. Nolles says her dad is the primary person in charge of packing the showbox, while mom oversees.

"Dad makes sure we have everything in the showbox, and I try to make sure we have all of our marketing materials together, including the flyers," she says.





Left: Lexi Marek ensures she takes not only quality — but healthy — hogs to shows, including the World Pork Expo in Des Moines, Iowa. Top right: Among Marek's showing essentials are her whip and brush, and a ponytail holder to keep her hair from distracting her in the heat of a class. Below right: Jeff Holmes, DVM, (second from right) and his family (left to right) Cody, Danielle, Deanna and Tanner, have years of experience in the showing. He says exhibitors must pay careful attention to the health of their showstring at all times.



"We also have a load-out list on a white board, which we check off as we pack items. It's definitely a team effort."

The Mareks rely on a team system, both while preparing for a show and during daily activities, Marek says. Because she and her three sisters are in dance and sports, their schedules are packed. Therefore, she says, everyone pitches in and does their part.

"Our schedules conflict so much with dance, volleyball and basketball," she says. "We share the responsibilities and work together. Dad does the feeding, and we walk the hogs and wash them — the other responsibilities."

Once the animals' items are ready to go, it's time to focus on the showman.

### *getting it all in*

Packing the suitcase isn't a last-minute task for these girls. Marek begins packing for herself a week before the show.

"I start when I have enough time to think

about what I need to take," she says. "I always pack a lot of belts — belts are my weakness. And, with four girls, we take plenty of hair stuff and jewelry."

Marek's mom also prepares a packing list for each girl on the computer, and prints it off for each girl before a show.

"When we go to Denver, we're gone for eight days," she says. "Mom gives each of us a list, so we don't forget anything."

Nolles also gets a head start on packing her suitcase — sometimes beginning as early as two weeks before a trip.

"My necessities are show jeans — two pairs for a longer show," she says. "If we're heading to Denver, I make sure to have plenty of warm clothes. And, of course, lots of jewelry. I take two jewelry boxes with me. I'm proud of myself if I can fit everything in a suitcase on wheels."

Once the showboxes and suitcases are packed, these showmen hit the road with their families and livestock. And when they arrive to a show, the teamwork continues.

### *divvy it up*

While at the show, Marek says each family member has their own responsibilities.

Mom, Heather, is responsible for taking photos and ensuring each girl — Lexi, Macy, Makenzi and Leah — is ready for the ring. Dad, Tim, organizes feeding. And, together, they walk and wash their pigs.

"That's a lot of work," Marek says. "When we have one pig per exhibitor, everyone has the responsibility of their own pig. And if we need help, we help each other out."

When it's time to head home, Marek says, each family member once again chips in to get the packing done quickly.

"It usually gets pretty crazy," she says. "We just try to get things back into the showbox, and not worry about putting things away just as they were packed. And, we always have show programs, ribbons and what we buy at the show. We just put it all in the boxes, then sort it when we get home."

When it comes time for the Nolles family to load out at a show, Nolles often stays with the cattle while her parents get the trailer hooked up.

"We wait until most people have left, then we don't have to wait in line so long," she says. "We work together to put everything in the trailer. We're not that organized in loading — and we sort and organize when we get home."

By working as a team and dividing responsibilities, the journey can be a smooth one. After all, isn't it all about the journey, rather than the destination?



# keeping 'em HEALTHY...

## ON THE JOURNEY

Not only is it important for livestock showmen to be prepared in what they bring in their showbox. It's also important that the animals they take to the show – or bring back home – aren't carrying along extra cargo, such as illness or disease.

Jeff Holmes, DVM, Lu Verne, Iowa, has been practicing veterinary medicine since 1989, and currently owns Holmes Animal Clinic. He and his wife, Deanna, sons Cody and Tanner, and daughter, Danielle, also are involved in Holmes Show Cattle. He has produced many state and national champions since 1980. Danielle also actively raises a show lamb flock under the name Blondie Show Lambs.

He says exhibitors and their families can do many things to help maintain health in their animals at home and on the road. He says, most importantly, is to pay careful attention to your animals.

"It is important to monitor your animals closely for early signs of illness," Holmes says. "You should pay attention to things such as a change in attitude, feed consumption and water intake, and also note any changes in bowel movements."

In addition, he says, respiratory symptoms such as increased rate of breathing, coughing and nasal discharge should be evaluated before you hit the road.

Marek says she and her family do their best to ensure every animal they take to a show is healthy.

"If they're feeling sick, we don't take them out of the barn," she says.

Because most major shows require a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection, completed by a veterinarian

within a certified time prior to exhibition, you should let your vet know if you suspect any illness.

During the inspection, the vet will also perform a physical examination for these symptoms, Holmes says. Your vet will also inspect for contagious dermatologic diseases including fungus, lice and mange.

## AT THE SHOW

Holmes says when you arrive to a show, you should continually monitor your animals for the same concerns as at home. Feeding and watering should also be carefully monitored.

"Try to maintain as normal of a feeding schedule and amounts as possible, to avoid gastrointestinal upset," he says. "Also, avoid access to other animal's feedstuffs, because what may appear to be similar feeds may actually contain ingredients that can be harmful or create residue issues."

Animals may also not drink water that tastes different that what they have at home, Holmes says. Therefore, he suggests bringing your own water in containers; bringing a water filter; or including additives to mask the flavor of water and prevent dehydration.

"Also, do not allow animals to drink from common watering tanks, as this may be easy access to contagious diseases from other individuals," he says.

Temperature stress can be an issue in extreme heat or cold at a show, as well, he says.

"Fans, misters, foggers and periodic rinsing will help avoid heat stress," Holmes says. "Vice versa, during cold temperatures, try to avoid allowing animals to be wet for extended periods, as this will lower their body temperature and may lead to sickness from added stress."

And, of course, when bringing animals back to your barn, it's critical to prevent bringing back illness or disease.

## AND NOT BRINGING IT HOME

Holmes says shows can be an opportunity for

illness and disease to spread. But, proper precautions can help prevent contamination.

Potential threats will vary by species, he says. Swine are at greatest risk to certain viral and bacterial diseases such as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), circovirus and erysipelas. Cattle could be exposed to Bovine Respiratory Disease organisms, coccidiosis and dermatologic organisms such as ringworm and lice. And, sheep exhibitors should be aware of the risk of their flock being exposed to respiratory diseases and coccidiosis, but most commonly club lamb fungus.

"Any time that a high number of animals from so many different homes are comingled in a contained or small environment, an increased threat for disease occurs," he says.

Therefore, when bringing animals home from a show, Holmes recommends a period of isolation.

"This isolation will vary with each species, but they should be monitored for signs of sickness," he says. "This will hopefully prevent the passage of diseases to individuals at home. If in doubt, don't turn out!"

Most of the time, Marek says, she and her family exhibit terminal animals, so bringing illness and disease home with their livestock isn't much of a concern. However, when they do exhibit breeding hogs, they follow a strict quarantine program.

"If we go to a breeding hog show, we quarantine and keep the animals away from the rest of our herd, to ensure they're healthy," she says. "And, if someone comes to the farm, they must always wear plastic boots."

And that's a great idea, Holmes says. In addition, he recommends disinfecting boots and equipment from the show, before using them around animals at home.

By taking the proper precautions, your animals can be safe and healthy, regardless of which point of the journey they're in.

## can't leave home WITHOUT IT!

Katie Nolles, Bassett, Neb., and Lexi Marek, Washington, Iowa, have been showing livestock for many years on the junior show circuits. They say these items are must-haves when on the road for a show.



### FOR THE HOGS

Marek says the whip, brush and bucket are critical items for the hog showbox.

"The pigs are easy, because these are the main things you can't do without," she says. "Anything else, you can get by without or buy at the show."



### FOR THE CATTLE

Nolles says adhesive and a water filter are the two most important items for her showbox.

"We almost always end up having at least one heifer that won't drink water," she says. "That's why we need the filter. We also can't leave home without the vet box, the Vita Charge and electrolytes."



### FOR THE GIRLS

Of course, Marek says, a show gal must be prepared. She says her boots are her most important item in her bag.

"And, I also have to have a ponytail holder," she says. "I have to have my hair pulled up, or else it gets in my way."