

THE HIGHLAND HOOFBEAT



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SUMMER LEARNING EVENT

Learn how to judge Highland Cattle.

Page 4

HIGHLAND BEEF MARKET

Demystifying Mythical Creatures

Page 2

SUMMER GATHERING

Hot fun in the summertime!

Page 14

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

You may recall we recently conducted a survey of our NCHCA members. Thank you to everyone who participated. We have reviewed the data and have learned so much about you, our amazing members. With this information and insight, we look forward to better serving and supporting our NCHCA community. To beginners, breeders, hobbyists, beef producers, and those who show cattle, our goal is to support your development and success.

We have shared the survey data with all our committees. Our goal is to help ensure that our leadership and committees are on the same page with the goals and interests of our members. This data will also help the NCHCA provide targeted educational opportunities to support your success and our mission of *"Protecting the integrity and sustainability of the Highland breed by promoting education and social interactions of its members."*

We plan on sharing a deep dive into the survey results with our members soon. As an association, who do you think we are? How many years of experience do you think our members have? What challenges did our members share with us? Dear reader, the answers may both delight and surprise you. Stay tuned, the results will be shared soon. In the meantime, I hope you all enjoy spring, the season of rebirth in the northland. North Central continues to thrive because of the dedication and passion of its members. Thank you to everyone who contributes their time, energy, and enthusiasm to making this Association the success it is today.

Maureen Matt
President
North Central Highland Cattle Association

KEVIN OPPERMAN ON

DEMYSTIFYING MYTHICAL CREATURES AND THE HIGHLAND BEEF MARKET

By: Lydia Ingram.

Lydia runs Noble Bear Highlands with her husband, Darrin, and an unnecessary number of unscary livestock guardian dogs in the Cherokee National Forest of Tennessee's Smoky Mountains. Noble Bear focuses their breeding program totally on potatoes—Highlands that are almost as round as they are long, produce many tots, go with everything, and are reliable even after long-term storage. When they are not unseriously showing cattle around the country or attempting to out-bribe each other with calves and apple snacks, they can be found standing on the deck playing the "is that a potato or is that Epic Lad" game while sipping questionable amounts of caffeine.



Recently, there has been an increase in conversations about the Highland's place—or lack thereof—in beef markets both within and without the association, stimulating useful commentary in breeders' groups online and at regional gatherings. Darrin and I have discussed more than once the disparity in knowledge of beef traits between those of us breeding Highlands as pedigreed breeding stock and those breeding specifically to market beef, having once fallen into the category of folks who assumed that a Highland would just be good beef by a certain age or that a beef cow is a beef cow, apart from maybe some size differences due to genetics. As we've studied how to interpret the ultrasound measurements of our own bull or poured over John Keep's databases for correlations, it became clearer all the time that there is a science involved in beef that inherent bias (or, perhaps, the intimidation factor of trying something new) causes a disproportionate percentage of Highland breeders to overlook.

Enter Kevin Oppermann of Highland Spring Farm in Wisconsin.



If the beef industry ever felt complicated or nuanced, Oppermann is the fantastically frank wrecking ball you need to break through the first walls of opposition. Within the initial moments of our interview, I nearly clutched my imaginary pearls when he stated that he processes 2-3 Highlands every other week to meet demand, and not all of those are steer. "We ruthlessly cull," Oppermann stated bluntly. "Always get rid of junk—immediately." Considering how emotional it may feel for some breeders to cull a Highland they bred and raised, or how attached we tend to become to these intelligent beasts, the idea of processing up to 75 animals in a single year shattered the lenses with which seed stock producers often view their herds. While it's true that Highland cattle are a beef breed, the follow-up to that statement is often, "Yes, but they aren't just a beef breed." Herein lies what, in Oppermann's

opinion, is the first fatal mistake to the Highland beef market.

"Some breeders treat Highlands like some sort of mythical creature, or, like, the greatest of all kinds of cows. No one has ever bought beef [from me] specifically because it was a Highland...consumers don't care about, 'Oh, it's got the most nutrition,' or whatever else. They want to know if it tastes good, and they want a good story. They'll remember it because it was a Highland, and Highlands are cute. They'll come back because they'll say, 'Yeah, I drove by your place and saw all the cool Highlands.' But they don't want to sit there and listen to a whole run-down on the breed first. Tell them a good story about the cow, pitch it as locally raised, and deliver good beef."

I have to admit that, as a breeding stock program which agonizes over traits in specific cows and maps pairing nuances, my first inclination to Oppermann's statement was rebuttal. From a breed standard approach, I could (and sometimes will) argue the importance of specificity in knowledge about the

breed and about each Highland we own. It was then that it occurred to me that my response was exactly the reason why Oppermann's view is an important, objective counterbalance. Highland Spring established and maintains a beef market that was sufficient for Oppermann to leave his other job and do beef full time, with 70% of his sales direct-to-consumer and the other 30% derived from wholesale environments, such as restaurants, corporate kitchens, and grocery-type stores. The value of experience cannot be overstated, and the fact of the matter remains that any program considering a beef branch or converting entirely to beef operations benefits from insider knowledge in a market still struggling for air space.

Which begs this question:

How did he do it?

His answer: "You kinda have to do a big jump [to go beef full time]." Oppermann explained that he got into Highlands with his wife because his grandparents had 35 acres that risked becoming overgrown. "Like everyone



else,” he says, they saw a neighbor’s Highlands, thought they were cute and cool, and bought a few. From there, it escalated quickly. They were up to 40 Highlands when a large, nearby operation needed to cease operations for health reasons. When Oppermann inquired about available stock, they suggested he just take all of them...all 150 animals. So, in that year, he and his wife welcomed a child, bought more acreage, and moved to about 200 total Highlands. Oppermann cautions that he wouldn’t necessarily recommend doing it that way for most people, but pointing back to the sheer number of animals needed to fulfill demand in a continuous business sense, quantity does become the limiting factor—particularly with regard to the slower rate of growth and maturation in Highlands as a breed.

I asked Oppermann, given the importance of consistency in beef quality and taste, whether he had made a study of the genetic lines that best serve his beef purposes, supposing that the approach wouldn’t be too terribly different from that of breeding stock programs who are looking to improve specific attributes. In classic Oppermann fashion, he cracked a wry half-smile, shrugged, and said, “Not really.” Truly, the man is not safe around pearls. However, and also in classic Oppermann fashion, his explanation was

simple and direct: the acquisition of animals is hard enough without being choosy. The dams he has that produce well and consistently are still alive; anything else that fails to meet herd maintenance needs is finished well and processed. When I suggested that he might have worked out some natural selection for this narrowing down of lines that do well where he is (given that he also doesn’t fuss too much about specific mineral or supplementation beyond the advice of the local co-op), the wry half-smile reappeared with another shrug, “Maybe.”

Oppermann’s acquisition struggles are not foreign to Highland operations of any type, though. He described the Highland Golden Age that allowed many of us to go from a few practice Highlands to a full herd in no time due to lower pricing. As his program has always been aimed at beef—so much so that he almost never sells breeding stock—he began by buying in up to ½ of his total herd in Highlands of any age to fill demand. Although his initial market had been reversed, with 70% of his total sales consisting of wholesale, and only 30% direct-to-consumer, Covid changed his entire methodology and approach. Consumers, unable to go to the restaurant or grocery store for their beef, were now increasingly interested in locally sourced produce and meat. Oppermann

Continued on page 8



STOP GUESSING.

Start Knowing.

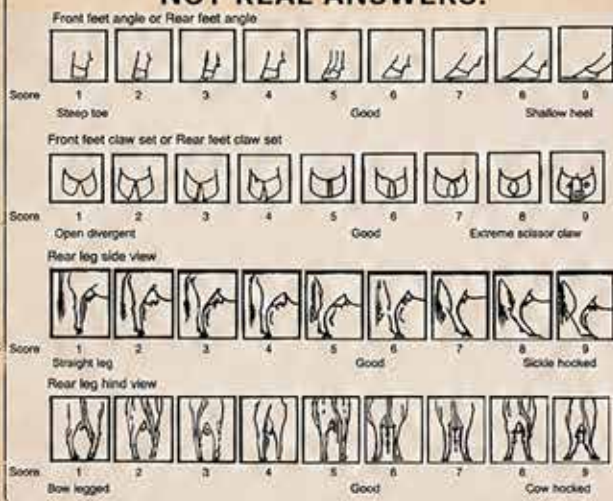
LEARN TO JUDGE HIGHLAND CATTLE

WORKSHOP & TRAINING



NOT HELPFUL

**CONFUSING CHARTS.
NOT REAL ANSWERS.**



HELPFUL

**REAL CATTLE. REAL SKILLS.
REAL CONFIDENCE.**



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE

International cattle judge **Jacob Larson** will show you in detail what makes sound cattle



GREAT LEARNING VALUE

\$25 Spectators seats still available



FOR EVERY LEVEL

New or experienced—this training will take your skills further.

**FREE
HOT LUNCH**

**DON'T JUST READ IT.
See it. Feel it.
MASTER IT.**

JUNE 27, 2026

FLATLAND FARMS • ELKTON, MN

★ **SUMMER LEARNING EVENT** ★

**JUDGE BETTER. BREED BETTER.
BUILD THE FUTURE OF THE BREED.**

YOU'LL LEARN TO EVALUATE:

- ✓ STRUCTURE
- ✓ MOVEMENT
- ✓ FEET & LEGS
- ✓ BALANCE & CORRECTNESS
- ✓ FUNCTION & PURPOSE



**NORTH CENTRAL
HIGHLAND CATTLE ASSOCIATION**

NCHCA



★ QUESTIONS? CALL 320-279-7528

GO TO [NCHCA.ORG](https://nchca.org) TO REGISTER



Are you ready to sharpen your eye, strengthen your decision-making, and grow as a Highland cattle breeder?

This immersive, hands-on workshop is designed for cattlemen and cattlemen who want to better understand what makes a truly outstanding Highland animal—whether your goal is improving your breeding program, preparing for the show ring, or developing the skills needed to become a confident and capable judge.

This is not a sit-and-listen seminar.

You'll be out of your seat, in the pens, evaluating real cattle, ranking classes, learning communication skills, and gaining practical experience you can immediately apply to your own herd.

"Whether you're an experienced breeder wanting to refine your eye or someone interested in learning the foundations of cattle evaluation, this workshop offers a valuable opportunity to grow.

What Jacob is doing with this class is objectively giving people the information they need to evaluate Highlands on the same standards, taking the emotion out of it and putting everyone on a level playing field. When everyone understands what a correct Highland is, everyone can work towards producing better Highlands because buying a Highland is an expensive investment. Also, it takes some of the mystery out of shows and encourages breeders to appreciate winners when they really are done right, or just give each other a pat on the back regardless of finish for a nicely bred Highland."

- Darrin Ingram Noble Bear Highlands

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

described revamping his website, his farm store, and his farmer's market approach to take advantage of the market shift, resulting in the flipping of sales percentages. Highland prices were still reasonable, but beef prices were soaring alongside his market.

Stability in Highland pricing was not to be much longer, as we've all seen. As asking prices for steer climbed alongside breeding stock, it no longer became financially sound to travel hours at a time for small numbers of Highlands—some of which were rather poorly constructed for beef—when he was able to find them. I opined somewhat the struggle in general breeding to convince breeding programs to cut/band bulls more often to reclaim good quality in the American herd, but Oppermann responded, "I don't care if people want to produce junk Highlands. I don't know why they would—it's kind of a dumb goal to have. But I can buy those and flip them for beef at a profit...cull the junk." In the interim, Oppermann has bought in cross-

bred animals to cut costs both in acquisitions and in finishing times, often relieving the cost of the "third winter" necessary to finish a Highland. Although he started with shorthorn crossbreeds, he has since found the best consistency in quality and taste by using British Whites and Angus, adding that he's bringing in a nice Angus bull to put on some of his Highlands this year.

We asked Oppermann what solutions he might suggest with regard to difficulties in the Highland beef market. His first suggestion was one we've heard echoed throughout the collective regions: biannual, regional steer sales. He explained that, in theory, it would be much simpler to gather steer at regional sales where they could be sold according to regional pricing per pound. Then producers who are shy about processing their own steer or simply have nowhere to go with them can rely on a set income from them twice a year. This would also encourage more breeders to cut/band bulls that aren't exceptional while relieving them of resource drain from additional head on pasture space. Fair pricing for beef programs. Convenient solution for breeding programs.

With regard to whether steer shows and carcass competitions would be useful, Oppermann's reply was mixed. The plus side, he admitted, would be that people would learn what a finished Highland actually looks like (instead of falling into the "it's old enough, so it's probably good enough" trap). He suggested that a contest for Juniors which required them to keep track of expenditures made in raising the steer in order to teach input/output costs would also be a good learning experience, giving AHCA Juniors hailing from beef programs a place to shine amongst their classic show counterparts. "But I probably wouldn't have much to do with any of it," he said, finding amusement by this point in my surprised expressions.

"If I were to bring the very best of my steer to a competition, and its carcass was graded and scored...what happens to it afterward? I know what the value of that beef is and how much I



can make from it. Why would I waste that opportunity and income? There would have to be some way to hedge that, or maybe just do a competition for specific cuts.”

This is a fair point—one that drives home a view that is sometimes overlooked. When the bottom line means the terminal end of an animal, it has to be worth it.

Oppermann’s general advice to breeders considering beef marketing was just as direct, perhaps best delivered in the rapid-fire way we posed it and received response.

The “missing opportunity” in Highland beef is simply that people aren’t beefing lower-quality stock. It’s not hard to build a local beef market around you as long as you have beef and can vouch for its quality and taste.

“Don’t make it weird.” If we’re already asking consumers to buy beef “out of [our] truck,” at farm stands and shops, or in local markets, they don’t need a full history of the breed. They came for beef. Deliver the beef. Highland lore can follow later.

Refer to your state beef sales regulations in terms of whether you must use a USDA processor to sell beef within your state. While intrastate sales generally require USDA processing, some states allow a simpler state certification on beef for interstate sales.

Understand that not all processors operate the same. Some will do custom cuts, while others stick to commercial standard cuts in quarters, halves, and wholes. Availability of processors and their approach will have a lot to do with how you move beef.

Always work directly with restaurant owners and corporate kitchens. Chef turnover rates can be so rapid that it becomes uncomfortable to tell owners they still have a bill with you for the beef that was selected by the now-previous chef.

To these, we would only add this recommendation, perhaps as the most important starting point for programs of any size who are considering selling beef in any quantity, whether just to friends and family or on an Oppermann-level scale: finish one of your own Highlands and eat it. Because Highland beef is the most nutritious beef. Because Highland beef is the tastiest beef. And because one cannot understand our beef program peers without grasping the value of what they produce and represent for our breed as a whole in their efforts to present Highland beef as viable in the market space. Rising tides raise all ships.

To contact Kevin Oppermann for ongoing conversations about all things beef, feel free to reach out to him via the contact information below:

www.HighlandSpringFarm.com

highlandspringfarm@gmail.com

414-659-2676



KEVIN OPPERMANN'S HIGHLAND SPRING FARM

BAVETTE PIZZA!

Having a gathering but want something easy? Watching your carb intake? Disgusted by the craze of cauliflower pizza crust? Enjoy really good pizza? We have the solution! Steak crust pizza with our incredible bavette cut!

When I first saw this recipe I knew I had to try it and it is delicious! Similar to a skirt steak, the bavette, also known as the sirloin flap, is a long, thin, and well-marbled cut. Sliced against the grain, it's tender and flavorful and, as it turns out, makes for delicious pizza base! Impress your party guests with a Bavette Pizza!

Ingredients

- * 1 whole Highland Sirlon Flap (Bavette)
- * Salt & pepper
- * Olive oil
- * 1.5 cups of pizza sauce
- * 1.5 cups of grated mozzarella cheese
- * Choice of toppings

Preparation

Season the bavette with salt, pepper, and oil as needed.

Prepare your grill for a very hot temperature to sear.

Sear both sides of the steak (1-3 min) to create a crust.

Reduce heat to allow for indirect cooking.

Lather in pizza sauce, mozzarella cheese, and other toppings (we used pepperoni and mushrooms).

Close lid and let cook for 10 min or until the steak is 120F and the cheese has melted.

Pull steak off grill and rest for at least 10 min.

Top steak pizza with any additional toppings (we used basil, red pepper flakes, and parmesan cheese) and salt to taste.

Slice against the grain to serve!



NCHCA
**NORTH
STAR**
HIGHLAND SHOW
AND SALE

SEPT. 11-12TH, 2026

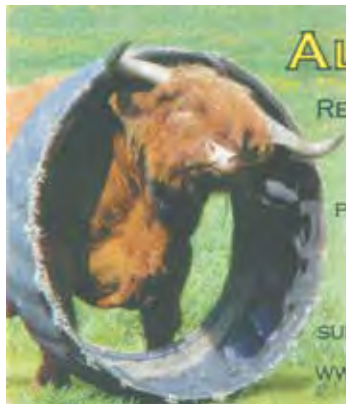
SALE HELD SEPT. 12

ALL CATTLE ON THIS SALE WILL BE HALTER BROKE AND READY TO HANDLE
BIDDERS CAN BID IN-PERSON, ONLINE AND VIA PHONE BIDDING.

NCHCA.ORG • HIGHLANDSALE.ORG • SALE@NCHCA.ORG

NEW LOCATION

STEELE CO. FAIRGROUNDS DWATONNA, MN



ALMOSTA FARM

REGISTERED HIGHLAND CATTLE

STEVE AND SUE DYKE

P.O. BOX 27, 101 WEST STREET

MAGNET, NE 68749

402.586.2631

SUE@ALMOSTAFARMHIGHLANDS.COM

WWW.ALMOSTAFARMHIGHLANDS.COM



LMR Farms

26485 Midland Ln

Dyer, TN 38503

www.lmr-farms.com

615-420-0152



You can't beat
our meat -
naturally
tender!

- Grass-Fed & Grass-Finished
- Quality Highland Beef Member
- Sustainably & Humanely
Pasture Raised
- Antibiotic Free
- Chemical Free
- Hormone Free

Molly Bauer

612.245.6285

molly.foragegirls@gmail.com

www.foragegirlsfarm.com

Stepping Stone Acres

"Goals are like stepping stones to the stars."



**Rick and Paula
Walker**

573-341-5298

rpwalk67@centurylink.net

PO Box 15 • Rolla, Missouri 65402



Semen, Embryos, &
Online Auctions

Call: (833) 444 - 4269

Email: info@highlandgenetics.com

www.HighlandGenetics.com

The Best Highland Genetics, All In One Place



ALMOSTA FARM

REGISTERED HIGHLAND CATTLE

STEVE AND SUE DYKE

P.O. BOX 27, 101 WEST STREET

MAGNET, NE 68749

402.586.2631

SUE@ALMOSTAFARMHIGHLANDS.COM

WWW.ALMOSTAFARMHIGHLANDS.COM



Tabletop Acres, LLC



Registered Highland Cattle

Registered Breeding Stock • Quality, Pasture Raised Beef
920 591 0591 • tabletopacres@gmail.com • www.tabletopacres.com

Midway Meadows

Quality Highland Beef
Registered Highland Cattle



Jason Paulson & Julianne Motis
+1 (218) 576-3633
midwaymeadowsfarm@gmail.com
Since 2010 in Esko, Minnesota

Find us on Facebook, Midway Meadows

LAST CHANCE RANCH



ESTD 2010

SCOTTISH
HIGHLAND
CATTLE &
CLYDESDALES



J BAR T

Highland Cattle Co.

AHCA Registered Cattle
&
Semen Sales
website: www.highlanderheaven.com

John & Tina Keep
Summersville, MO 65571
jbt@highlanderheaven.com

Horns & Hooves Ranch



Terry & Chris Kneisel
10843 110th Ave
Finlayson Mn 55735

218-380-1658
thekneisels@frontiernet.net

ALMOSTA FARM

REGISTERED HIGHLAND CATTLE



STEVE AND SUE DYKE

P.O. BOX 27, 101 WEST STREET
MAGNET, NE 68749

402.586.2631
SUE@ALMOSTAFARMHIGHLANDS.COM
WWW.ALMOSTAFARMHIGHLANDS.COM




John & Jeanna Hegewald
Oxford, Iowa
319 631 5791 / 319 631 5790



Windemere Farm

Registered Highland Cattle

John & Anne Proctor
3960 County Road HO
Junction City, WI 54443

715-457-6748
www.WindemereHighlands.com
WindemereFarm@TheProctors.com

Boulder Meadows Highlands



Larry & Cindy Sassen
Breeders

Quality Highland Beef
Registered Highland Cattle
Rotational Grazed Grass Fed

20374-223rd Street
Little Falls, MN 56345

Phone: 320-745-2444
lsfjfarm@brainerd.net

Galen Allen
319-231-3368



Shari Allen
319-231-4474

11831 Barnes Ferry Road — La Porte City, IA 50651
highland@lpctel.net



Gypsy Ridge Farm
Quality Scottish Highlands & Beef

Jeremiah & Cherie Mewes
Turtle Lake, WI

715-641-0065 or 715-641-0110
gypsyridge2016@gmail.com



**Back to the
Roots Farm**

- ◆ Breeding Stock
- ◆ Semen
- ◆ Beef

Bruce and Samantha Schmitz
Watkins, MN
www.backtotherootsfarm.com

Janet Larson
262-539-3257
232 Bridge St.
Burlington, WI 53105



Nathan & Emily Larson
262-210-3256
17166 Polk Rd.
Stanwood, MI 49346

LARSON'S
HEADACREZ

Headacrez82@gmail.com



WINDLAND
F L A T S™

Partnering with Highland Farms in
Minn. and Wisc. to market and sell
grassfed Highland Beef.

Contact us to discuss how to
become a partner farm.

www.WindlandFlats.com
info@windlandflats.com
(262) 617-4232

Josh Krenz
Princeton, MN

Boulder Meadows Highlands



Larry & Cindy Sassen
Breeders

Quality Highland Beef
Registered Highland Cattle
Rotational Grazed Grass Fed

20374-223rd Street
Little Falls, MN 56345

Phone: 320-745-2444
lsfjfarm@brainerd.net



Jesse & Nichole Denver

Grand Rapids, MN

jndlivelstock@gmail.com 218-398-2494





SUMMER GATHERING HELP NEEDED

Join the 2027 AHCA Summer Gathering Planning Committee!

Excitement is already building for the 2027 AHCA Summer Gathering in beautiful Iowa, and we need your help to make it unforgettable! This is a fantastic opportunity to bring your creativity, energy, and love for Highland cattle to the table as we plan events, tours, and activities that highlight our community and our breed. Whether you're a seasoned event planner or simply love seeing things come together, your contributions will help shape an experience our members will remember for years to come.

Being part of the planning committee is also a great way to connect with fellow breeders, share ideas, and have a hand in creating a summer gathering that reflects the spirit and camaraderie of the AHCA. If you're interested in joining the team—or just want to learn more—please reach out to [insert contact info]. Let's make 2027 in Iowa the best summer gathering yet!



The Wilkinson's
19046 Irish Drive
Richland Center, WI 53581
608-647-3594
buckcreekfarm@outlook.com

Scottish Highland Cattle



The McConnell Family
2425 U.S. Hwy. 14
Balaton, MN 56115

*Registered/Sovereign
Highland Cattle
& Club Calves*

P: 507-829-2558
E: pellcreek1875@gmail.com
Find us on Facebook



Crocus Hill Cattle Co.
The Scheresky Family

AHCA Registered Highland Cattle Ranch
Max, ND 701.500.1989 hello@crocushillcattleco.com





AN AHCA REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

The North Central Highland Cattle Association (NCHCA) was formed in 1982 to promote Scottish Highland Cattle, form a marketing unit for breeders, and to provide a local organization closer to home. The organization has done this and provides opportunities for youth and families to have fun with their Highland cattle. Our association provides networking and educational opportunities for its members, has an active junior program for youth, and provides a local voice to the national organization, the American Highland Cattle Association.

Board of Directors

President - Maureen Matt Tel 608-415-7641
maureengmatt1985@gmail.com

Vice President - Michelle LeTourneau Tel 320-279-1790
housenfarm@gmail.com

Treasurer - Ginny Green Tel 315-406-1201
Treasurer@nchca.org

Secretary - Randi Johnson Tel 651-491-5061
Secretary@nchca.org

Director - Todd Green Tel 315-406-1201
tgreen57.tg@gmail.com

Director - Jeremiah Mewes Tel 715-641-0065
gypsyridge2016@gmail.com

Director - Jessie Webb Tel 507-402-1462
Jessica.webb31@hotmail.com

A.H.C.A. Rep - Jan Larson Tel 262-539-3257
headacrez@yahoo.com