

SPRING 26

THE HIGHLAND HOOFBEAT



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THE ANNUAL MEETING

We had a great time in Duluth. Read all about it
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BEYOND THE BEEF

Maximize usage and profit.
Leave no bone unturned.
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ASK HIGHLAND MAMA

Have a question?
We know a gal with the
answers!
Coming soon to the Hoofbeat

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

January is often a time for reflection and new beginnings, and this year has been no exception. As we look ahead to the opportunities of 2026, February provided a wonderful opportunity for celebration and connection. Members of the Association gathered in Duluth, Minnesota for the 2026 Annual Meeting, where breeders enjoyed the chance to reconnect with friends, share ideas, and learn something new.

Now that we have entered March, the Association is more active than ever. Our committees continue to do outstanding work to support our membership and promote the Highland breed. The Sale Committee has been hard at work organizing the Frozen Genetics Sale, while the Calendar Committee is currently collecting photo submissions for the 2027 calendar. In addition, the Hoofbeat Committee has prepared the first quarterly publication— the very issue you are reading now.

This is also your call to action. One of the greatest strengths of our Association is the willingness of members to step forward and contribute their time and ideas. There are many ways to get involved, and we are always looking for new volunteers who can bring fresh perspectives and new opportunities to our membership. It's not too late to participate and get involved. Contact committee chairs (<https://www.nchca.org/contacts.html>) if you want to share your unique talents with the association.

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. I look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events and continuing to celebrate our shared passion for Highland cattle.

Maureen Matt
President
North Central Highland Cattle Association

NC HIGHLAND CATTLE ASSOCIATION

ON MISSION TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE
HIGHLAND BREED BY PROMOTING, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS OF ITS MEMBERS.

Beyond the Beef

HOW NOBLE BEAR HIGHLANDS USES THE WHOLE COW

On a cold, January evening, I stood next to my husband, Darrin, with a flashlight, watching one of our favorite cows rapidly clean her brand new calf. As anxious as we were about the single-digit temperatures (try not to laugh—here in East Tennessee, we close schools for those), we were equally anxious for mama to let us check the gender on this calf. Darrin brought Abby her celebratory post-partum meal, and I carefully angled the flashlight so as not to blind him as he lifted the calf's now-dry tail. When he dropped a short series of expletives, I thought our luck hadn't changed much: we'd had six bull calves in a row that calving season and were feeling cosmically picked on. I started some words of consolation, both for him and for myself, "That's alright. I'm just glad it's here and healthy, and Abby looks great..."

"No, no, no," he spat out, cutting me off. "It's finally a heifer!"

We named that heifer Novena, after the string of prayers I had prayed waiting on her arrival while we tried to figure out what to do with so many little bulls. Given that we were so early into Highland breeding and had never raised cattle, we shot a text out to one of our first mentors and asked her what she would recommend. Her suggestion was to "sell them at weaning with steer pricing and let the buyer decide whether they should be kept intact." It seemed reasonable enough to assume that people would know what they were looking for and how to assess it, perhaps even better than we did. So, since those calves were all technically correct in conformation with useful genetics, we let them all go that year...intact.

Now, if you're cringing, believe me—we are, too, when we think back on this moment. A significant part of me would like to pretend this never happened, much less admit it in a public forum. Despite the good intentions and surface-level logic of that particular mentor, it's not merely a mistake to leave all one's bull calves intact. It's flat irresponsible, as both Jacob Larson's article "Criteria for keeping or castrating bull calves" in last summer's Hoofbeat and The Bagpipe: Bull Buyer's Guide from Summer 2022 clearly demonstrate with ample resource. We've learned in the years since how to assess our calves and our breeding stock to ensure everything with our name on it is worth having, but when we recently saw a picture of a bull from that time, we both heavily sighed and slammed our palms into our foreheads. After making sure that farm was set up with a much worthier bull, the inevitable question came: "What do we do with this first one?"





“Eat him.”

We could hear the disappointment in the silence; most of us can empathize with years of bull-heavy calf crops and a sense of wasted investment. Just this past year, we navigated miles of red tape to import a bull prospect who had begun his first year with very promising measurements and beautiful genetics, only to have disappointing BSEs and a subpar scrotal circumference. And as the auction prices for heifers have now approached or exceeded the values of whole vehicles while basic toiletries and groceries pose powerful arguments for intermittent fasting, all I can say to you is,

“We get it.”

There’s a boom surrounding luxury Highland heifers, and we could all use a piece of it, even while acknowledging it’s not so much a service to the breed as it is to our credit scores. It has become so difficult in our breeding society not to view the word “steer” as synonymous with “loss.”

However. I would like to challenge all of us to reconsider this mindset on two separate grounds. The first is that, as breeders of registered stock in a breed that is on and off protected lists around the world, it is our first job to support healthy numbers of Scottish Highlands with quality stock. We do more damage polluting whole herds with one bad bull (ask me how I know) than we would not breeding at all. In Una Cochrane’s famous Highland masterpiece, *A Keen Eye*, she reminds breeders that reversion, which is the expression of a gene introduced more than ten generations prior to the Highland in question, can haunt

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP:

STRONG CATTLE, STRONGER PEOPLE

If you walked away from this year's Annual Meeting thinking, *"That was one of the good ones,"* you weren't alone.

The survey responses summed it up pretty well:

"Speaker John Keep was exceptional!"

"Best meeting I've attended."

"Loved John's perspective on data and the fact that he shared it for all of us to use."

That's not fluff. That's a room full of breeders who felt like their time was well spent.



A Meeting That Hit Its Stride

We handled the business side of things – financial reports, committee updates, program reviews – and the association remains steady and moving forward.

But more than the agenda, it was the tone that

stood out. There was a sense that everyone in the room wants the same thing: to protect and promote the breed well.

That's a healthy place to be.



A New Look for the NCHCA

The NCHCA Board of Directors was excited to reveal of the new NCHCA brand.

The refreshed design incorporates a cow/calf image backed by the north star. A fitting symbol of what we're truly about: stewardship, continuity, and the future of the breed.

It reflects both heritage and forward momentum.

This isn't just a logo tweak.

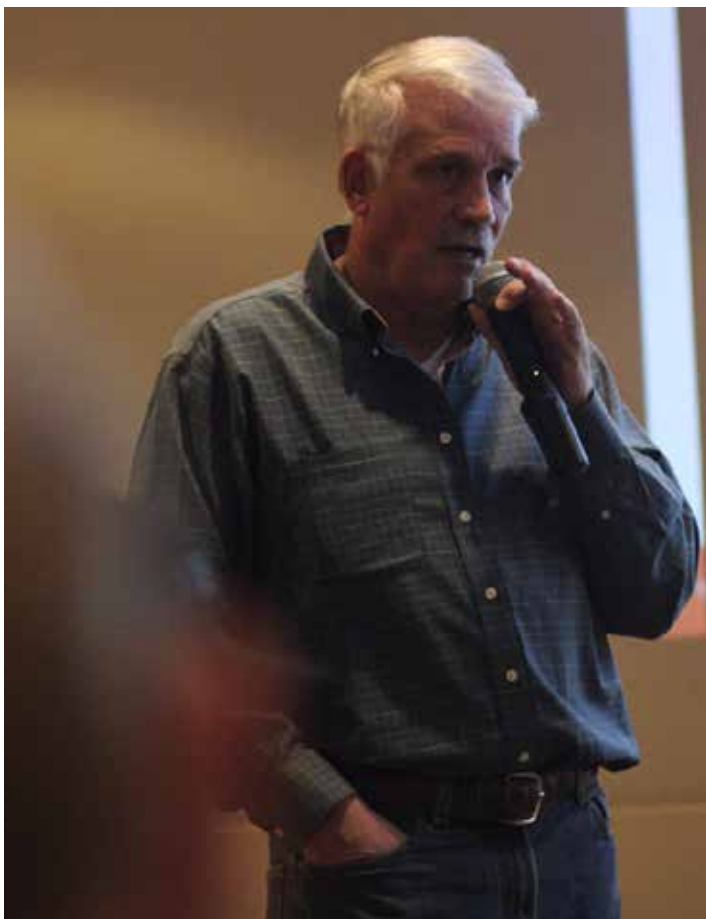


It's a commitment to consistency.

The new brand will be used across all NCHCA front-facing events – including junior programming, shows, and promotional materials – creating a unified and recognizable presence wherever our association shows up.

Strong cattle deserve a strong, consistent identity.

This is a step in that direction.



Keynote Speaker: John Keep

John Keep delivered a keynote that clearly resonated.

He challenged us to think critically about how we use data in breeding decisions – not as a replacement for good stockmanship, but as a tool to refine it.

What members appreciated most?

He didn't just speak in theory. He shared practical data and encouraged producers to use it.

We left encouraged – and maybe just a little challenged – which is exactly what we needed.

Keynote Speaker John Keep is widely respected among fellow breeders for his quality breeding program as well as his deep passion for the data behind great cattle—especially when it comes to bull performance and genetic potential. He is especially known for his willingness to share bull data and performance insights with other producers, believing that good information strengthens not just individual programs but the entire breed community.



North Star Award: Cindy Weideman

A highlight of the weekend was honoring Cindy Weideman as this year's North Star Award recipient.

The North Star Award isn't about flash. It's about steady leadership.

Cindy has faithfully served this association with integrity, consistency, and a willingness to do the work – often without fanfare. She has been a steady presence, a thoughtful voice, and someone others can depend on.

Every organization needs someone who quietly keeps the compass pointed in the right direction. Cindy has been that North Star for this association, and this recognition was both fitting and well-earned. We are better because of her leadership.

Member of the Year: Julianne Motis

We were also proud to recognize Julianne Motis as Member of the Year.

This award reflects engagement – showing up, contributing, supporting events, and investing in the association's success.

Julianne exemplifies that spirit. Her enthusiasm and involvement strengthen this organization, and her willingness to lean in makes a real difference.

Associations grow when members like Julianne step forward instead of sitting back.



The Fall Show Gets a New Name



In keeping with our momentum and renewed identity, the fall show has a new name:

THE NORTH STAR HIGHLAND SHOW

The show will be held in Owatonna at the Steele County Fairgrounds, on the second weekend of September each year going forward.

This year's dates are:
September 11th and 12th.

The new name reflects who we are and where we're headed. It also ties beautifully to the North Star theme – leadership, direction, and excellence within our region. So let's have *The North Star Highland Show* set a steady standard for excellence in Highland cattle.

Mark your calendars. Plan your entries.
And maybe start halter breaking a little earlier than usual.

Looking Ahead

The association is in a strong place – financially stable, engaged, and aligned.

But progress requires participation. SO....
If you have ideas, bring them.
If you have experience, share it.

If you have a story – especially one involving mud, broken panels, or a calf that showed up earlier than scheduled – send it in.

Thank you to everyone who attended and invested their time and energy.

Here's to a unified brand, a renamed show, steady leadership, and another year of raising cattle we're proud to stand behind. And hopefully, gates that swing the right direction more often than not.



One of the things our members told us loud and clear in the recent survey is that the simple act of getting together matters. Beyond the meetings and agendas, there is real value in taking time to relax, share a meal, swap stories from the pasture and the shows, and get to know the people behind the operations. These moments strengthen the fabric of our association. When we know each other personally, we trust each other more professionally, and that sense of community is what keeps our organization strong. Good conversations and a few laughs together aren't just enjoyable—they're part of what makes us better cattlemen and a better association.



BONE MEAL FOR GARDEN USE

Ingredients:

Animal bones saved from the discard of the opposite page broth recipe.

Method:

Allow bones saved from broth recipes to dry. Then place bones on a dehydrator tray or oven tray to dry at 160 degrees for about 4hrs. Appropriate dryness will be evident when the bones disintegrate as pressure is applied. Using a mortar and pestle or food processor, reduce dried bones to a fine powder and store in an airtight container until ready to use.

Beyond the Beef

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

a bloodline long after even the most responsible breeder thinks they have “bred it out.” I don’t say this by way of virtue signaling—although please do consider us repentant and reformed regarding bull calves—or to encourage the temptation to hopelessness because “the perfect Highland does not and cannot exist.” I say this rather as a call to arms and a useful reminder of the purpose of our national association. Ask not what the breed can do for you, but what you can do for the breed, right?

Secondly, we are grossly undervaluing steer. While it is true that most steer will never bring the kind of auction pricing we’re now accustomed to seeing, they can absolutely bring more than we’ve come to expect...just in pieces. Beef prices are more favorable now than previously, and naturally that is the first place we tend to go when thinking income from steer. But beyond the beef, there is still quite a bit of value to be had. Take, for instance, the current tallow skin care trend. Not only is the hype totally legitimate, but a cursory search for “organic, grass-fed whipped tallow balm” turns up pricing from \$10 to \$40 for a 4oz container. A similar investigation of bone broth with the same organic and grass-fed conditions brings up shockingly similar pricing for a 1qt jar. And for those of us with some artsy-ness, a search for hides, mounted horns, and jewelry crafted from horn begets pricing above a cool \$1k. The possibilities are endless.

Does reaping these benefits take a bit more effort than a single cow sale? Sure, it does. But we also have so many members of our association who have online stores, farm stores and farm stands, or any other tangential business set up who might happily take your raw materials and work out a mutually beneficial business agreement.

Our strength, dear friends, is in our network of support and the sharing of knowledge. To that end, I leave you with the method I use to turn bones into bone broth and bone meal for the garden. While we use all of these things in-house as opposed to selling them, the cost savings (and nutritional value) is significant for us each year based on our average use of each.

Lydia Ingram
Noble Bear Highlands
www.noblebearhighlands.com



BASIC BONE BROTH

Ingredients

1 gallon of water
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2-4lbs animal bones
Salt and Pepper to taste

***Optional add-ins:

1-2 onions, 3-4 carrots, garlic, rosemary, and oregano

Method

Place all ingredients in a large pot or slow cooker and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cover, cooking for 12-36hrs (the longer it goes, the better it will be). Cool, strain, and discard solids.

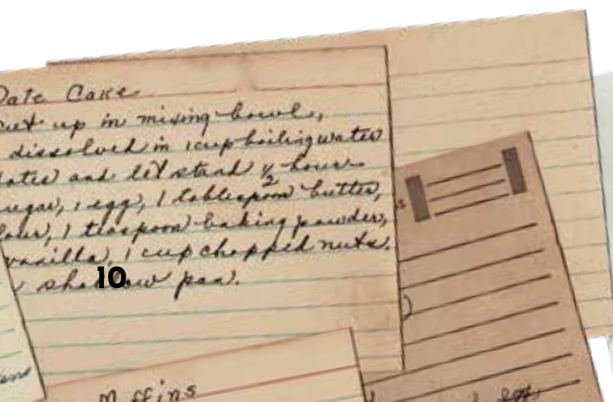


2025 was another exciting year for the NCHCA-Jr's. However we are looking forward to a productive and active 2026. We have been meeting monthly, via the Band App, to discuss all things Highlands. I believe we can all agree that not only does this beautiful breed bring us together from many different states, but talking about the Highlands is our favorite thing! We are working hard to get to know each other and we might actually be learning something we didn't know about the breed along the way. If you know of a Junior that would like to join in the fun, please have them download the Band App and request to be a member or checkout our facebook page for more information. Remember they must be a Junior Member of the NCHCA! So parents, please sign yourself up and your junior too!

We have come up with a really fun idea for our 2026 Annual NCHCA-Juniors Fundraiser. This year we will be creating a cookbook. We are seeking entries for the cookbook. Beef will be the main topic but we are also going to add in other things as well. Please check out our flyer and entry form on our facebook page, the NCHCA facebook page, and [the NCHCA website](#). You can also get in touch with any Junior. We would be grateful for the help to make this a success.

We ask that you submit all entries by May 1, 2026. Please help us celebrate with a Happy May Day! We are also seeking sponsors for our cookbook. We would happily include your business card in our cookbook for a simple \$25 donation. What better way to get your farm name and your brand out there for all to see and support us Juniors at the same time. We are grateful for everyone that supports us and guides us along the way. We look forward to hearing from everyone.

If you have any questions you can always email me,
Tate Pape, NCHCA-Jr Vice President,
at Lone Pine Livestock: lonepinelivestock@gmail.com.
Or email Casey at: caseyrael480@gmail.com



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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 Jan Larson. Her email is headacrez@yahoo.com. Let's make 2027 in Iowa the best summer gathering yet!

2027 HIGHLAND CALENDAR

Annual Member-Submitted Highland
Calendar Contest

Our members' farms are full of stunning Highland cattle—and now it's your turn to pick a favorite! We've gathered the best photos submitted by fellow AHCA members, and it's time to vote for the one that steals your heart.

Don't miss your chance to have a say in crowning this year's Highland Cow Photo Champion. Voting is quick, easy, and a whole lot of fun!

**Submission deadline extended to
April 15th**

Voting ends April 31st

Visit <https://www.nchca.org/calendar-submission-27.html> to cast your vote today!





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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.

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