

WHA 2026 Annual Meeting 1-24-26

President Steve Merry opened the Annual meeting with a welcome to all attendees. Lisa Davis provided the Secretary's report and Financial report, and Caleb Ahrens presented the Audit report and the 2026 WHA Budget. BJ Jones presented the Hall of Fame Award to Jim and Diana Wiechert of Maple Crest Farm, Iola, WI. The Wisconsin Hereford Association thanks Jim and Diana for all of their support for Wisconsin Herefords, and the activities of the WJHA and WHA through the years!

Kelly Oleson provided the Royalty report, thanking the 2025 Wisconsin Hereford Royalty for their service and representation of Wisconsin Herefords. Allison Bartlett and Tessa Smith were the 2025 Wisconsin Hereford Princesses, and Amari Edge and Liberty Wetenkamp were the 2025 Wisconsin Hereford Sweethearts. 2025 Wisconsin Hereford Queen Morgan Firlus gave her farewell speech via Zoom. The 2026 Wisconsin Hereford Royalty were named: Sweethearts Amari Edge, Charlie Kent, and Liberty Wetenkamp. Applications for the 2026 Wisconsin Hereford Queen and Princess will remain open until February 15, 2026. Rosie and Madison Katzenberger reported on their membership and participation in the National Hereford Women Board, and encouraged ladies' membership in the National Hereford Women organization.

BJ Jones provided the WJHA report, with information on WJHA activities, scholarship winners, and the upcoming Junior National Hereford Expo in July 2026 in Madison, WI. The 2026 JNHE is a great opportunity to volunteer and support young Hereford enthusiasts, see high quality Hereford cattle, and network with other Hereford Breeders. Volunteers are especially needed for check in and ring clean-up. The WJHA thanks Bergman Farms, Augusta, WI for providing the 2026 Donation Heifer, to be sold lottery-style at the WHA Spring Sale on March 21, 2026. Blake Brancel introduced the 2026 WJHA Officer Team. Kelly Oleson reported on the upcoming WHA Heifer Grant program, with 4 grants available for 2026. One is sponsored by the State Sale consignors; one by the WHA, and two memorial grants provided by the family and friends of Gary Reinke. Grant applications are open until March 1, 2026.

Rick Starck reported on the 2025 WHA Advertising Committee activities of participating in the WPS Farm Show, and Wisconsin Farm Technology Days. Janet Wiechert provided information on the WHA Member Slide Show, which is displayed at Trade Shows and WHA events. Tammy Vaassen, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Beef Council, and provided an update on the activities of the Wisconsin Beef Council, to support and benefit Wisconsin's Beef Industry, including the May Beef Month Advertising Campaign; a "Fuel Up with Beef" promotion with Kwik Trip; the new 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans; Health Professional Outreach Programs; Best Burger contest; Prime Rib Trail; and regional Direct Marketing Workshops.

Katrina Edge gave the Communications Committee report, including information about the WHA Facebook page activities and following, and 2025 WHA Website analytics. Katrina also provided the Feeder Calf Sale & Promotion report, with details of favorable prices at a recent sale at Bloomington Livestock Exchange and the Greater Midwest Certified Hereford Feeder Calf Sale. Katrina also delivered a presentation from Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, with updates on organization and legislative activities from 2025 and WCA activities for 2026. Janet Wiechert reported on the WHA County Youth Awards program, and encouraged attendees to view the poster display of 2025 recipients. The Wiechert Family will be working with Wisconsin County Fairs in 2026 to coordinate the program and provide WHA scotch comb gift boxes to top Hereford Showman in their respective age categories.

Kelly Oleson provided a report on The Wisconsin Review magazine. The Review magazine was published 4 times in 2025 and has made a smooth transition to having a “self-cover.” There was a successful cover photo contest for the May 2025 issue, through the WHA Facebook page, coordinated by Liz Johnson. Aubrey Wynn was the photo contest winner. Ad pricing for 2026 was presented, with a small increase over 2025 due to printing fees. The 2026 Prime Advertising Pages were auctioned by Tod Brancel. Winners are as follows: Inside front cover: HC Herefords; Page 1: SandRock Ranch Herefords; Centerfold Left: Pierce’s Hereford Haven; Centerfold Right: Wildcat Cattle Company; Last Page: Crooked Creek Herefords; Inside Back Cover: MGM Polled Herefords; Back Cover: Four Leaf Cattle. Kelly also reported on the new 2025 – 2027 WHA Membership Directory. 2500 copies of the Directory were printed, with 1100 being mailed to The Wisconsin Review mailing list, 900 for the JNHE Welcome bags, and 500 for WHA Activities.

BJ Jones presented details of the 2025 Wisconsin State Fair WHA Jackpot Steer Class, coordinated by Kermit Rhiner. There were 6 steers shown in the class. The champion steer was shown David Schultz, and bred by Clayton Cattle Company. David Schultz generously donated his \$500 winnings back to the WHA Jackpot Steer Class program. BJ encouraged breeders and juniors to enter steers in the WHA Jackpot Steer class – if entry numbers fall too low in the future, the WHA will not be allowed to continue the class at the State Fair. WHA Sale Manager Melissa Berggren reported on the upcoming WHA Spring Sale on March 21, 2026 at the Dutch Valley Auction Building at Platteville, WI. Cattle numbers to date are 6 genetic lots, 6 cow-calf pairs, 12 bred heifers, 20 open heifers, and 15 bulls. The Spring Sale banquet will be held at Crossroads Supper Club, Platteville, WI on Friday, March 20, 2026.

Liz Johnson provided information on the WHA 2025 Central WI Hereford Tour, at Oleson Family Farm, Steiny’s Herefords, Crooked Creek Herefords, and Pierce’s Hereford Haven. Annual meeting attendees enjoyed viewing the video that Liz had created, summarizing the 2025 Tour. Since 2026 is a JNHE year, the next WHA tour will be in 2027. If anyone is interested in hosting the 2027 WHA Tour, please contact Dave Steinhoff. Caleb Ahrens detailed information on the 2026 World Beef Expo at Wisconsin State Fair Park.

For New Business, Liz Johnson presented the proposed WHA Bylaw changes. The updates would modernize the bylaws to enhance representation of WHA membership on the Board of Directors. Also, the updates would adapt the WHA’s structure to fit efficiently with current and future activities of the organization. The updates were discussed. BJ Jones moved to accept the bylaw updates as presented. At the date of the Annual meeting, 62 members had paid dues and were eligible to vote. Twenty-eight in-person attendees, and 4 attendees on Zoom voted in favor of approving the bylaw changes, and two in-person attendees voted opposed. The bylaw changes were approved and will be implemented by the WHA.

Steve Merry recognized retiring WHA Directors Rob Ash, Point Creek Herefords, and Rick Starck, Starck Century Farm, thanking them for their service to the WHA.

New and re-elected board members were announced: Steve Merry, MGM Polled Herefords; Caleb Ahrens, CMA Herefords; Michel Dahnert, Hickory Grove Farms; and Dawson Firlus, Crooked Creek Herefords.

With all business presented and discussed, the meeting moved to adjournment. Diana Wiechert moved to adjourn, and BJ Jones seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Board of Directors Reorganizational Board Meeting: 1/24/26 at The Lodge at Mauston; 3:30 pm

Attendees: Steve Merry, Caleb Ahrens, Kelly Oleson, Dave Steinhoff, Dawson Firlus, Michele Dahnert, Katrina Edge, Janet Wiechert, BJ Jones.

The Board of Directors elected Steve Merry as President, and Caleb Ahrens as Vice President.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.