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Commercial VIEW

A passion for the future

As you may be aware, I recently have begun my responsibilities as the National Swine Registry (NSR) director of commercial services. Finally, some may say, after causing many people (including myself) to wonder what takes so long to finish a Ph.D.

Needless to say, I'm grateful for the patience of everyone involved and am excited for what's to come.

Since shortly after accepting the position, I had envisioned my first editorial involving a stimulating topic. I apologize, but I doubt you'll find anything revolutionary in what is to follow. On the other hand, I thought it might be useful to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the vast majority of you that I haven't had the privilege to meet to this point.

When it comes to purebred livestock, I share a sincere passion with all of you. I grew up in central Colorado on a purebred Yorkshire and Spotted operation that specifically sparked a lifelong interest in the swine industry – probably the underlying reason for many of the opportunities I have pursued throughout my career.

The youth livestock show experience is certainly one of the highlights of my life, and like for others, these events have created many fond memories. Also, livestock judging has been a fundamental part of my life since I was young, and these experiences have been the backbone of many opportunities I have been presented.

During my graduate career, I worked with more than 50 students in my five years as the livestock judging coach at Iowa State University. Recently, I completed my Ph.D dissertation, in which my thesis work involved an evaluation of the genetic components associated with meat quality in purebred Duroc swine.

The combination of a practical production background and a diverse graduate education has allowed me to further understand the importance of using sound science to address problems of economical importance to swine production.

It's no secret that today's industry picture is vastly different than that of my preceding generation. We are blessed as an industry to be influenced by an extensive list of sound-minded and progressive producers.

Many examples of these key breeders

currently serve on the NSR's boards of directors. It was interesting to read the profiles of each board nominee in the October issue of *Seedstock EDGE*. When asked what each nominee believes is the key to the success of the association, each mentions the importance of breed integrity, strengthening the influence of the independent purebred producer within the commercial sector and development of the next generation of swine producers.

In light of the industry as a whole, the strength and weakness of the purebred seedstock producer may be described with the use of a single term – independence. With that said, independent producers in the United States need to be individually aware of breed goals and capitalize on current resources available for genetic improvement. However, on the same notion, the culmination of our independent seedstock producers represents the largest genetic nucleus in the world, established through a state-of-the-art, multi-breed genetic evaluation program, STAGES.

Through individual breeding programs and a willingness to collaborate efforts, the independent seedstock producer can put himself in the driver's seat for tackling many issues facing the industry. As it relates to exposure and profitability within the commercial sector, we need to couple our individual efforts to approach issues such as current corn prices and the improvement of feed efficiency, niche-market development through enhanced meat quality, and the practical use of molecular genetic information in breeding programs.

Through youth programs such as the National Junior Swine Association (NJSA), we need to continue providing leadership and tools to better prepare youth for future success. Perhaps it is just as important to expose youth to opportunities and issues that exist beyond the show ring.

I believe that if you pursue your passion, success will follow. Like many of you, my passion lies in the area of purebred swine genetics and, ultimately, livestock. I have interacted with those who lacked passion and have questioned their happiness. Much like we have experienced in each of our lives, progress is attainable if we keep industry goals in mind and enthusiastically incorporate our efforts. 