

# Beef Business



**Matt Woolfolk** | director of performance programs

## Following the Trail North

Whether it's cattle breeding, baseball, business, or life itself, change is inevitable. Things just don't stay the same from day to day. The trail that our lives follow isn't a straight shot where we can see everything ahead of us; there are always twists and turns. If we keep following that trail and moving forward, eventually we end up in a different place than where we started. I've been following the trail that I am on for the last four years, and I feel like I have continued to move forward. Now, I find myself in a new place different than where I started.

This month, I will be spending my last day in the ASA office and saying "so long" to the 8:00 to 4:30 routine on Prairie View Road. It's a big change for me, but it comes about because of the best reason that I could ever imagine. On May 1, I am marrying a wonderful woman and starting our lives together on her family farm in southwest Iowa. Erika and I are so excited to enter this phase and no longer having 200 miles between us more often than not. We get to fulfill both of our biggest dreams: go through life with the one we love, growing and improving our cow herd, and hopefully raising a family that loves this lifestyle just as much as we do. With all that excitement, unfortunately for me the move presents a drive to the ASA office that's just a bit too far down the trail.

I would be remiss if I didn't use some space to simply say "thank you". Thanks to the people of the Shorthorn breed who made my four plus years in the office enjoyable. Many of you I feel fortunate enough to count as friends because of my time at ASA. I've enjoyed meeting you, seeing your cattle, and learning more about the breed from those who love it most. Thank you to the coworkers I have shared this office with since I moved to Missouri in 2017. We worked hard, but we certainly made time to enjoy each other's company. A

special thanks to the guy who offered me the chance to come to Kansas City and join this association, Montie Soules. I've learned so much working for him that I can apply to more than just being your Director of Performance Programs.

In the last four years, I believe that Shorthorn cattle have made moves in the right direction. Commercial bull demand is strong, with bull sales in the breed growing and becoming more successful. Our genetic evaluation is a better tool thanks to IGS and the moves to single-step method, incorporating genomics, and weekly calculations. By taking advantage of programs like the National Sire Test, the Genomically Enhanced Female Project, and the Iowa State Heifer Project, you as breeders have gathered information to make your herds (and the breed) stronger. Our ASA Committees are active, and their input has influenced the direction of ASA. There are exciting opportunities on the horizon for Shorthorn cattle. My challenge to you as Shorthorn breeders is this: keep moving forward. There are breeders leading the way to make Shorthorns better and more widely accepted, and they are doing a lot of things right to accomplish this goal. Take an honest look at yourself and determine if you feel you are one of those breeders. If you don't, now is the time to get on board the movement. I don't know how many times I have said this before, but I'm going to say it again: the American Shorthorn Association is here to help and assist breeders where we can, but we can only do so much. You have to be willing to help yourself. The Association breeds zero Shorthorn cows a year, and we have zero calves to market. You have to make your own decisions to breed better cattle and find ways to be successful marketing them. We will do our best to provide tools and opportunities to help you, but you have to be willing to use them, even

if it means change or doing something differently.

While moving to Iowa does mean a career shift is in order, it does not mean that I am completely walking away from the Shorthorn breed. While it won't be my everyday job, I will still be involved with ASA. I will be transitioning to a consulting role to help with some of the same "bigger picture" projects and tasks that I work on now. While my ability to take care of "everyday" things won't be the same, you'll still have the same great customer service you've come to expect from the staff in the KC office. I hope to keep some space here in the Shorthorn Country as well. I will probably take a little break to move out of one house and into another, get married, and enjoy the early days of married life. Don't be too surprised if I'm back to writing this summer.

I look forward to continuing the relationships I have with a lot of you, even if they will be a little different now. As part of moving to Iowa, the opportunity will be there for me to work with seedstock producers on a more personal, herd-focused level. There's nothing I enjoy more than helping seedstock producers move their herds forward, and I think I still have something to offer even though I am not behind the ASA desk every day.

It's been quite an experience for me to work for the American Shorthorn Association. Thank you to all of you for the opportunity. May none of us forget the amazing opportunity He has given us to be a part of agriculture, the beef cattle business, and the Shorthorn family.

"He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth."

-Psalm 104:14

God Bless,

Matt Woolfolk

