

Stock Show Tradition

At the base of the Rocky Mountains, livestock enthusiasts start the year at the National Western Stock Show.



PHOTO BY TOSH COMMINGELLIS, ANGUS MEDIA

Story & photos by
JENA McRELL, digital editor

With a carefully marked sale book in hand, Nebraska cattleman Glen Ross studies a group of bulls consigned in the National Western Angus Bull Sale in Denver, Colo. He visits with the breeders, asks questions and takes notes. The conversation ends with a handshake and a smile, and he's on to the next bull.

The National Western Stock Show (NWSS) is his vacation from the ranch, Ross says. He attends each year to purchase his next herd sire.

"I had a budget, I picked so many out, and I start down [the list]. If I get the first one, I get him. If not, I just keep going down," Ross said. "I feel that comfortable picking eight or nine head out of the sale that I would be comfortable taking home."

The National Western Angus Bull Sale is the only sale managed by the American Angus Association. This year, Angus breeders consigned 46 lots that sold Jan. 13 in the crowded Beef Palace Auction Arena. In total, the sale grossed \$368,750 and averaged \$8,016 per head.

Unique from other bull sales, the Association's event begins in the showing. A panel of judges evaluate the animals and establish the sale order. Mark Nikkel, Maple Hill, Kan.; Jake Tiedeman, North Platte, Neb.; and Scott Bayer, Ringle, Wis., completed this year's appraisals.

Once the show was complete and the champions were selected, the animals came back into the showing, where prospective buyers were invited to inspect the bulls firsthand. Large groups of people descended from the infamous green chairs in Denver's Stadium Arena to walk around the showing and visit with consignors.

J.J. and Craig Reinhardt of Bar R Angus, Sloughhouse, Calif., have been bringing Angus bulls to the sale for several years, and believe the event helps expand their reach to a nationwide audience.

"Being in California, we're kind of an island," Craig said. "To be able to come here and have the opportunity to sell bulls to people all over has been really beneficial. Last year we sold to someone in Canada, and we've sent bulls to Idaho, Utah,

Nebraska, and it's nice to keep in touch with those folks and see how the animals are working for them."

With one walk around the showing, buyers can see animals from Oregon, Kansas, California, Nebraska and even Maryland. Ross stops to visit with the Reinhardts, taking a close look at the bulls they have on display. They must've captured his attention, because Ross will be delivered a Bar R Angus bull to his home in Gering, Neb.

"I've purchased bulls from the Reinhardts before. They are nice people, and their bulls reflect that in their breeding," Ross said. "I like a good-framed bull with solid bone and muscle, and the genetics to perform."

Connecting good cattle and good people is truly one of the National Western's greatest rewards.

Down in the Yards

Denver's historic stockyards have been home to livestock trading for more than a century. It's a marketing venue that's stood the test of time, as proven by the swarms of people bustling through the pens on a crisp January day.

For the Angus breed, it's one of the greatest displays of genetics in the country, and at the center of it all is the carload and pen competition. The show is what makes events at Denver distinctly unique, as breeders exhibit their cattle in groups of 10 and three, respectively.

In this year's competition, Angus producers presented six carloads and 43 pens of three in the Yards Jan. 16. Judges Doug Slattery, Cameron, Texas; Arlen Sawyer, Bassett, Neb.; and Phil Trowbridge, Ghent, N.Y., evaluated the entries on structure,

NATIONAL WESTERN
Stock Show



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performance expected progeny differences (EPDs) and phenotype.

“The pen and carload show probably lends itself toward the commercial business as much as anything we do in any of the shows,” Slattery said. “The commercial man is looking for quality and consistency in numbers, and he can come here and get an idea of a breeding program that fits him.”

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“You get to see new people and old faces every year, and try and let people see what we’re doing,” said Brian Stoller, heifer pen exhibitor from Bear Mountain Angus, Palisade, Neb. “There’s as many cattle people here as you could find in one place, so it’s a good marketing tool.”

The next century

For 110 years, livestock enthusiasts have traveled to the base of the Rocky Mountains each January to participate in the NWSS. To ensure that the tradition continues through the next century, there is much change on the horizon for the NWSS complex.

Denver voters approved a measure in November 2015 that provides funds for an expected 10-year project to

expand the show grounds and construct new facilities. Progress will be completed in phases, and the first is centered on the stockyards. The Livestock Exchange Building will be preserved, but everything else will be new — the pens, the sale arena and several new roads and bridges.

The second phase includes a 230,000-square-foot (sq. ft.) livestock center, where the cattle shows will be

hosted. Rest assured, Stadium Arena will remain a preserved piece of stock show history on the new grounds.

While changes will be ongoing over the next several years at the National Western, attendees and exhibitors are sure to continue to enjoy the community it creates between livestock enthusiasts worldwide.

“The most enjoyable thing about being

involved and judging here at the National Western is the camaraderie between Angus people and just ranching people in general,” Slattery said. “We, all of us, come out here and see people we only see one time a year. It’s a great gathering place and a great place to share ideas and thoughts about the Angus business.”



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