

A 10-Year Run



Star Lake Cattle Ranch makes history by winning Denver carload show for 10th consecutive time.

by Joe Rickabaugh

One of the highlights each year at the National Western Stock Show in Denver is the Hereford carload and pen show in the Yards. This competition highlights many great Hereford operations from across the country. Exhibitors who show carloads invest much time, effort, money and labor not only at the show but in the months leading to this great event. This competition previews the many genetic decisions these operations have made in their Hereford breeding programs.

This year the Hereford carload show witnessed a first for the Hereford breed and probably for all breeds in Denver. Star Lake Cattle Ranch, Skiatook, Okla., won the carload show, marking its 10th consecutive year to claim this honor.

"We are extremely proud of the ranch, our crew and our cattle to be honored with the carload award 10 years in a row," says Randy Blin, co-owner of Star Lake Cattle Ranch. "While the industry has changed in the type and kind of cattle that we exhibit, the Star Lake cattle have stayed in the forefront to deliver a consistent product that

meets the needs of the market. Having the honor of winning the carload trophy each year over the past decade reinforces that we continue to make the right genetic decisions in both our cow herd and our embryo transplant program at the ranch. To say that the carload competition at the National Western is one of the highlights of our year would be an understatement."

As Blin says, it is interesting to consider the changes that have occurred in the cattle exhibited in the carload show. As one reviews the carload data for each of the Star Lake carloads, some interesting moves within the data occur (See Table 1). The expected progeny differences (EPDs) for birth weight (4.9 to 3.8), weaning weight (39 to 54) and yearling weight (65 to 90) illustrate some encouraging trends.

Montie Soules, Star Lake manager, says the bull selection for the carload starts at calving.

Customers are important to all Hereford seedstock operations, and it is interesting to note that through the

years the Star Lake carloads have been comprised of junior bull calves that have been sold the previous fall in their fall production sale. The new owners are proud that their new purchases do well in Denver, but of much more importance is how the bulls work in the new owners' programs.

Ira Lee, Willow City, Texas, has been a longtime customer of the Star Lake program. "We have purchased seven bulls through the years that have been members of the Star Lake carload. All seven have worked for us, and a couple were bought sight unseen. These bulls are responsible for our heaviest calves at weaning, produced several bull calves that were our top sellers and have left us a set of females that flat work for us."

Winning 10 years in a row is quite a feat, but accomplishments of this degree don't just happen. It takes an incredible amount of time, genetic selection, feeding and management to exhibit a carload in Denver. Todd Herman, Star Lake herdsman, gives credit to the dedicated help. "We've been lucky to raise bulls that were competitive and have had a lot of good help."

Soules adds, "It is really unbelievable to be able to do this. I am proud that the bulls have been competitive enough to make this 10-year run. It has taken our best bulls each year to do this; in fact, we've had two national champions come from our carloads. The most important part of this over the past 10 years is that the bulls go on and do a good job for their new owners each year." **HW**

Table 1. Star Lake Carload Data

Year	Avg. Age	Weight	WDA	BW	WW	YW	MM	M&G	Frame	Scrotal	Fat	REA
2000	321	1,161	3.62	4.9	39	65	15	35				
2001	351	1,287	3.63	5	41	68	15	35	6.7	36.9	0.34	
2002	340	1,399	4.07	5	54	86	19	46	7.4	37.1	0.33	
2003	321	1,309	4.1	5.4	49	82	17	41	6.8	35.4	0.36	
2004	353	1,352	3.83	5.1	49	83	16	40	6.8	36.8	0.33	
2005	352	1,448	4.12	4.7	51	91	16	42		38	0.26	14.7
2006	351	1,345	3.83	4.9	52	90	18	44		35.7	0.33	15.4
2007	338	1,277	3.78	4.2	58	96	22	45		35.5	0.35	13.7
2008	368	1,399	3.8	4.6	49	82	19	43		35.6		
2009	359	1,330	3.7	3.8	54	90	17	44		36.8		