



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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THREE LONGHORNS GO BACK "HOME" TO SANTO DOMINGO

When three longhorn cattle from the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife refuge arrived "home" in Santo Domingo recently, a cycle which began 437 years ago was complete.

The longhorn as such is not an imported animal. Rather it is the result of that Texas did to some small black Spanish cattle with sharp horns which ran away from their owners to live their own lives in the great open spaces.

It was in 1521 that Gregorio Vallalobos, Governor of New Spain, brought the little Spanish cattle from Santo Domingo to what is now the Southwest. Some Spanish cattle came into the Southwest with Coronado and others.

Many of these got away from their owners and nature took over--developing a race of wild cattle which later crossed with lost or strayed cattle, many of them, of all things, shorthorns, which had escaped from American pioneers. The result was the longhorn, 10,000,000 of which were sent to market in the three decades which followed the Civil War.

The sending of the three longhorns to the Dominican Republic was an act of courtesy by one country to another. The Dominican Secretary of Agriculture wanted the three animals and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, obliged. The animals were rounded up by personnel of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and turned over to the Dominican consul at New Orleans.

The Wichita Mountains longhorn herd was established in 1927 by congressional action. It was established to assure the continuance of a type of cattle which played a brief, important role in the American scene and then gave way to other breeds. On January 1, 1958, there were 280 longhorns on the Wichita Refuge and 99 on the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska. This was after the fall sale and before the calf crop. The Wichita herd usually peaks at about 375 and the Niobrara herd at about 125. There are some longhorns in parks and zoos and others on some of the large ranches in the western United States and in Mexico.

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