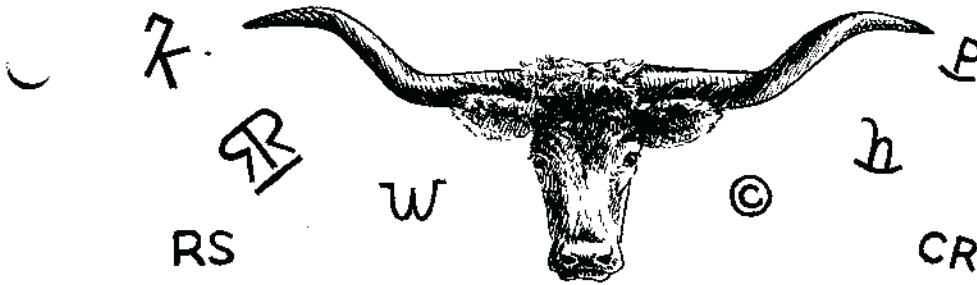


THE TEXAS LONGHORN



The famed Texas Longhorn can trace its ancestry through the black fighting bulls of Spain--descendants of the cattle driven into that country by the Moors--to the extinct aurochs, forebears of all European cattle. The first domestic cattle to arrive in the New World came with Columbus on his second trip to Santo Domingo in 1493; and the little black cattle were among the effects of Gregorio de Villalobos when he came to Mexico in 1521 as Viceroy of New Spain.

Wherever the Spanish went in the New World cattle went with them. Thus, when they began moving into areas north of the Rio Grande River in the late 1600's and early 1700's, they stocked their missions and ranches with Spanish cattle. Indian raids and the open range encouraged many of these animals to escape into the wild. There they increased rapidly in numbers and developed the characteristics that enabled them to survive on the hostile ranges of the Southwest.

Thus, the longhorn is distinctly American--a product of the North American Continent, resulting from natural selection and adaptation to environment. Hardy and active by nature, it was well suited to the rigors of life on the ranges of the Southwest and became the foundation stock of that region's great cattle industry of the 1870's and 1880's.

It is generally agreed that the Texas Longhorn evolved from these wandering wild herds, interbreeding with the fighting bulls imported into areas now in Florida, Texas, and New Mexico, and with straying domestic cattle from the settlers' wagon trains and farms.

Longhorns Dominated the Western Ranges

In his book, "The Longhorns," J. Frank Dobie, acknowledged authority on the subject, says, "The Texas Longhorn has made more history than any other breed of cattle the civilized world has ever known...determining the character and occupation of a territory continental in its vastness....However supplanted...he will remain the bedrock on which the cow country of America is founded."

Texas cowboys were driving longhorns to California during the gold rush days of the 1850's, braving Comanche and Apache attacks, for the high prices they received for their cattle. It is even said that a group of longhorns were being driven to New Orleans at the very moment Texans were fighting for their independence from Mexico in the battle of San Jacinto. But these drives ended during the Civil War and the cattle became so numerous on the ranges outside the fields of corn and cotton planted by the Texas ranchers that they were little noticed by their owners. It has been estimated that as many as six million cattle were in Texas at the close of the Civil War. Following the war, however, the longhorns were almost the only source of revenue in the Southwestern United States.

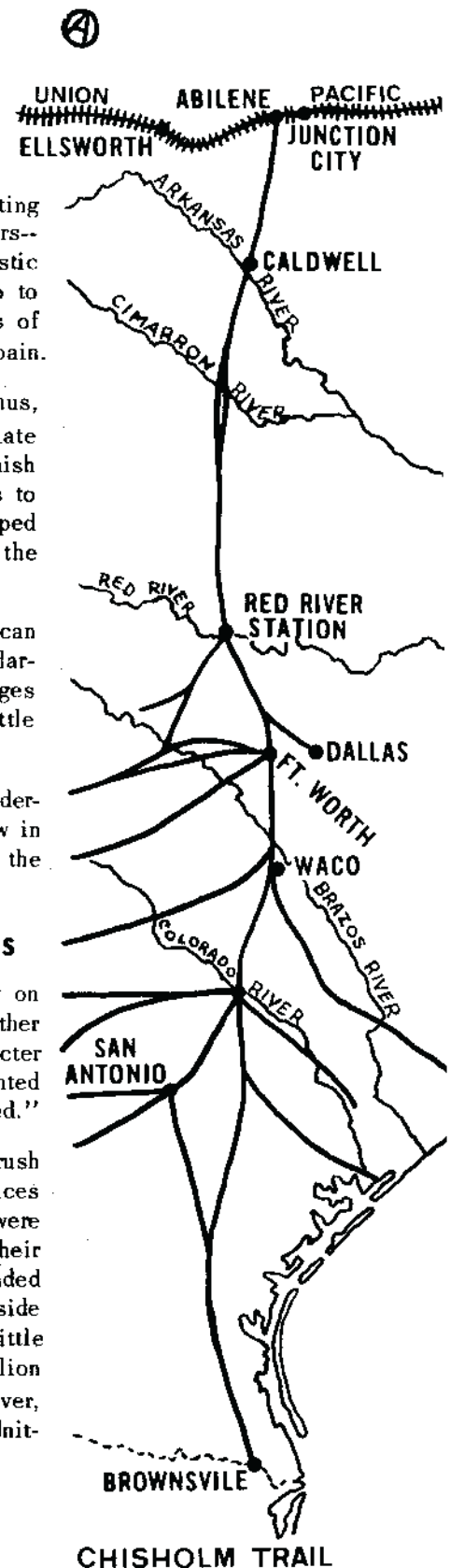



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Stewart L. Udall, Secretary

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Clarence F. Pautzke, Commissioner





While longhorns had been driven to California and to Louisiana before the Civil War, none had moved into northern ranges. The first great movement of these cattle began in 1866 when better than a quarter million longhorns were started northward from Texas into the ranges left vacant by the destruction of the buffalo and confinement of the Indian tribes to reservations.

In the next 25 years, many routes out of Texas including the famous Goodnight-Loving Trail and the 800 mile-long Chisholm Trail from San Antonio to the railhead at Abilene, Kansas, were to funnel some 10 million head of cattle from Texas ranges. The longhorns were destined for the markets of the East and the ranges of Iowa, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and Canada. The largest number of cattle to move northward over the Chisholm Trail was in 1871 when records show 600,000 left for northern ranges. The higher prices Chicago meat companies would pay for cattle wintered on northern ranges increased the northward flow in the 1870's.

Usually a herd numbered about 2,500 to 3,000 animals, as a larger number was too hard to handle well. Sometimes, for mutual protection, several herds were combined when passing through hostile Indian country. According to old records, such a combined group sometimes contained as many as 15,000 animals and 200 people.

When properly handled, the animals soon became accustomed to the trail and settled down, an aggressive steer taking the lead and usually holding it throughout the trip. Some ranchers had trained steers that led their cattle, such as "Old Blue," who made the trips for many years at the head of the Goodnight drives. The others found their places in line, and usually kept these positions. The more active animals would be found near the front, the "drags" in the rear. Cowboys--known as dragmen--were stationed along the rear sides of the herd and the grub wagon brought up the rear. They prevented the trailing animals from escaping and urged the weak or lazy animals along the trail.

Driving longhorns to market developed a special breed of horseman--a romantic figure that persists in songs and stories of the West. Because of the animals' extreme wildness, danger of a stampede was ever present.

Most stampedes occurred at night on the trail. A sudden clap of thunder or other loud noise, the odor of a skunk or smell of a lurking coyote, ducks flying too close to the animals as they drank from a stream, or a bull's "war whoop," when he smelled the blood of a butchered animal, could start the herd running. Cowmen claimed, however, that if a herd could be kept from stampeding the first few nights on the trail usually no stampede occurred on that drive. The cowboys dreaded stampedes most because of the loss of the cattle, the time wasted in assembling the herd again, and the damage the animals often inflicted on each other with their long horns. It is said that more cowboys were killed by lightning than by stampeding animals.

But the era of the longhorn was ending by 1895. Ranchers were bringing in better strains of beef cattle, and the closing off of the trails as the range was cut up into farms spelled finis for one of the most colorful periods in our country's exciting history.

Characteristics of the Longhorn

The Texas Longhorn is usually tolerant of people, but when aroused can be dangerous. Bitter fights result when one bull challenges the control of another over a harem of cows. When charging, the bull turns his head sidewise, hooking at his rival with the horn tip. Cows with new calves also are very dangerous if alarmed.

When caught in a blizzard, the hardy animals turn their backs to the storm and stand in small groups, heads together; further, they can rustle their own food on-the range--characteristics many ranchers learned to their sorrow were not possessed by the European cattle they imported in the 1880's to improve their herds. These highly bred cattle--in addition to having large appetites--would seek the nearest protection in a blizzard and stand there starving to death as they waited for their food to be brought to them.

The Texas Longhorn is a distinct breed of cattle. But when plans of the U. S. Forest Service got underway to collect a representative group of these cattle in the 1920's, it was soon realized that opinions differed considerably as to the true longhorn characteristics. Some sort of yardstick was needed to guide the men selecting the animals for the herd.

From numerous interviews with ranchers and trail riders, examinations of historical documents, and from other sources, the Forest Service developed a set of guidelines setting forth the basic characteristics a "typical" longhorn should possess.

The Typical Longhorn

Generally speaking, a typical and therefore "true" longhorn is big, raw-boned, and rangy. It is slab-sided and has a squarish look. The legs are relatively long, although the massive forequarters make the front legs seem shorter than they actually are. Some animals have a thatch of hair between the bases of the horns. The head is large and the face long, making the eyes appear far apart. The neck is short and stocky. A black muzzle, tail swatches, and eye rings are typical in some bulls. Coarse, thick hair and a heavy dewlap (fold of skin under the neck) are also characteristic. Bulls, in particular, have very touchy dispositions and bear watching.

Horns

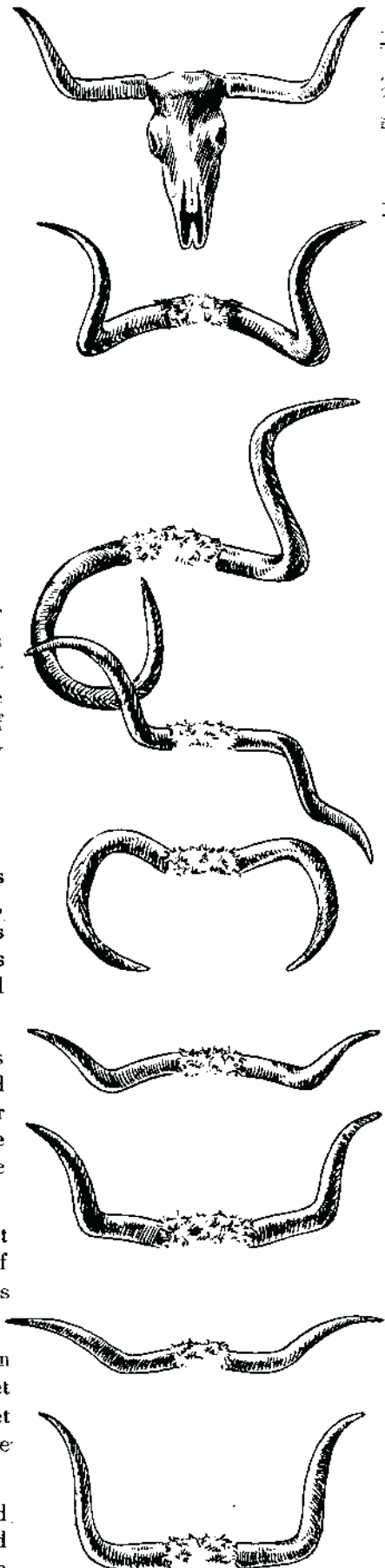
Bulls and cows are similar in body type to domestic dairy breeds. Steers are larger and more rangy in size than bulls and carry the widespreading horns, trademark of the longhorn. Good steer horns grow horizontally on the animal's head and are of two types: oxbow and corkscrew. The corkscrew develops with age. The horns of the longhorn continue to grow as long as the animal is in vigorous health.

Length of the horns can be determined in two ways. One method, known as "pole" measure, is to lay a marked pole on the horns of a corralled animal and measure the straight-line distance from one horn tip to the other. In the other method, which gives the total horn length, the contour of the back side of the horn is followed with a flexible tape from one horn tip across the head to the other tip.

The pole measure is the easier of the two to use on a live animal, but it gives a shorter measurement. For example, the pole measure of the horns of an 11-year-old steer on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma, was 5 feet 2 inches, while the total horn length was 9 feet 3 inches.

The greatest pole measure recorded on the Wichita Refuge for a longhorn steer is 6 feet 2 inches; for a bull, 3 feet 6 1/2 inches; and for a cow, 4 feet 1 inch. J. Frank Dobie reports a set of horns with an all-time spread of 8 feet 7 3/8 inches--probably pole measure. Horns of this length are so rare they are almost legendary.

Where did the steer get its amazing horns? It is known that Egyptian and Asian cattle--both in the bloodstream of the Texas cattle--sometimes showed a tendency to long horns. Geneticists have deduced that this characteristic (which is recessive in European cattle) must have doubled up in the longhorn.





Since the steer attains a greater horn spread than the bull, biologists have theorized that possibly the male hormones prevent the horns of the bull from developing as they do in the steer.

Color

Someone has said a herd of longhorns resembles a rainbow because of the great variety of colors the animals show. No two animals are exactly alike. Colors range through mulberry, speckled, and ring-streaked blues; slate or mouse-colored (or grullas--from Spanish for crane); duns and browns; yellows and creams; solid black and black splashed with red, brown, and white; most shades of red, with pale red most common; white and speckled whites; brindles; paints; and red-and-white peppered. Now and then "linebacks" appear--they usually are red, black, or brown, with a white or light-brown streak running along the backbone. Many such animals showed up in the old herds.

Weights

Some authorities with knowledge of the trail herds of the 1870's have cited 650 to 700 pounds as good weights for a longhorn cow, while a large cow might reach 800 pounds; a fat steer might tip the scales at 1,000 to 1,200 pounds. It is probable, however, that longhorns feeding on the lush grasses of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, in Oklahoma, or on the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, in Nebraska, run larger and heavier than the cattle on the southwestern ranges in the 1880's. It has been the experience on the Wichita Refuge that given a good grazing range, the Texas Longhorns tend to lose their lean and hungry look. For example, three 4- and 5-year old bulls brought to the Wichita from Mexico in 1935 had a combined weight of 1,535 pounds. One year later one of the bulls tipped the scales at 1,140 pounds.

Records maintained at the Wichita and Fort Niobrara Refuges show some cows exceed 650 pounds at 1 1/2 years and 1,000 pounds at 6 1/2; a record 3-year old steer at the Wichita Refuge weighed 1,070 and a 10-year old, 2,045 pounds; while bulls ranged from 1,075 to 1,300 pounds at 3 1/2 years and from 1,500 to 1,600 pounds at 7 1/2 years of age. Longhorns reach full growth at about 14 or 15 years. As they age the steers tend to lose weight and develop the gaunt, slab-sided appearance.

Extinction Hounded the Longhorn

Although these cattle once numbered in the millions, recent surveys show that less than 4,000 remain in the United States. Of these about 600 are on Federal refuges, the rest in State or private herds and in zoos and parks. Longhorns were at their peak in the 1880's, but they began to disappear from ranges with the introduction of better beef cattle--the Shorthorn and Hereford for greater meat production and the Brahmas for resistance to Texas tick fever. By 1900 intensive cross-breeding had nearly erased the typical longhorn, and by 1920 it was clear that if something was not done promptly the longhorn as it was known to the pioneer ranchers would soon become extinct.

Fortunately, in 1901 when the lands of the Apache-Comanche-Kiowa Indian Reservation in Oklahoma territory were thrown open to settlement, President Theodore Roosevelt by proclamation reserved a part of the more mountainous section near Cache for a forest reserve, later to become the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve. The grassy ranges, wooded streams, and wide valleys of the Wichita Forest provided just the kind of setting needed for a herd of longhorns.

Two men loom in the fight to save the Texas Longhorn from extinction: Forest Ranger Earl Drummond, who was first to propose that a herd be developed at the Wichita Forest; and Senator John B. Kendrick, of Wyoming, a former Texas cattleman who backed the idea in Congress. When the Forest Service officials began to lay plans for a small herd on the Forest in the mid-1920's they were hampered not only by a lack of authority and a lack of funds to carry out their plans, but also they needed guidelines (which they developed as we have already learned) for the men who would have the job of selecting the animals for the herd.



Urged on by Senator Kendrick, the Congress voted a special appropriation in 1927 of \$3,000 for a herd of longhorns on the Wichita National Forest. The Congress noted that the funds were "for the purchase and maintenance of a herd of longhorned or Spanish breed of cattle...to the end that the present comparatively few living examples of this historic breed of cattle may be preserved from complete extinction."

Armed with the descriptions of the most desirable characteristics of the typical longhorn, Forest Service employees Will C. Barnes and John H. Hatton began their memorable trip through the brush country and the coastal bend areas of Texas and beyond the Rio Grande into Old Mexico, seeking animals for the herd. After traveling about 5,000 miles and examining nearly 30,000 cattle they finally found 3 bulls, 20 cows, and 4 calves in the brushlands of southern Texas that showed typical characteristics. The small group of longhorns arrived on the Wichita Forest in August 1927. From this group, 1 bull, 19 cows, and 1 bull calf eventually became the foundation stock for the Federal herd. Three steers were also part of the original herd. On several occasions later, new animals were acquired for the herd through purchase and trades.

From the beginning only animals showing the truest of longhorn traits have been kept in this herd to keep it as nearly representative of the original longhorn herds as possible. This policy of the Forest Service has been continued by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the years since the Wichita area became a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Fittingly, the new arrivals were placed under the care of Forest Ranger Earl Drummond, to whom they were truly a dream fulfilled. From them was to come not only the fine Wichita herd, but also the foundation stock for the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska, herd and breeding stock for numerous smaller private herds throughout the United States.

Life on the Wichita Ranges

Life for the Texas Longhorns on the Wichita Refuge is much like that of cattle on any well-run western cattle ranch. The animals have nearly 60,000 acres of open grasslands, rocky slopes, and forested bottomlands to range over. The Wichita is divided into several fenced pastures. There are numerous lakes and ponds and it is seldom necessary for the grazing animals to go more than a mile to water. Only aged or sick animals receive supplemental feed. The animals find all the nutriment they require in the deep, thick grasses, and salt is distributed at various points over the pastures.

Most of the year the bulls are segregated from the cows, but about May 15 to the middle of August the cows are divided into small groups. Each group of cows is isolated in a pasture with one bull. This ensures arrival of the calves over a short span and at the best time of the year. It also assures continuity of the breeding records. Cows about to calve are placed in an isolated, fenced pasture and here the calves are born, and may be several days old before they are found. Each year, about 100 calves make their appearance in rapid succession on the calving range. As a rule, a longhorn cow does not need any attention when she bears her calf. Single births are the general rule, but a set of identical twins arrived on the refuge in 1943.



Careful records are kept at the refuge on each new calf, including its serial number, year of birth, lineage or ancestry, sex, and color. Most of the calves come in early spring and are weaned by their mothers in early December.

September is branding month. By then, the calves are about 6 months old. All are branded on the left hip with a serial number and on the left shoulder with the refuge's "Running WR" brand. The most promising bull calves--those with good color and body form, and out of animals with good horn growth--are kept for herd bulls. Another group is selected at this time for the steer herd and surplus calves and adults are sorted out for sale at the annual auction.

Great care must be used in handling the calves to avoid damage to their growing horns. At this time the heifer calves are also vaccinated against brucellosis or infectious abortion, a condition that causes infected cows to lose their calves. Branding and recording the animals began on the Wichita in 1931, and the records for all but four cows of the original herd are on file at the refuge.

When the longhorns must be moved from one pasture to another or brought into the corrals at fall roundup time, the visitor to the refuge sees a bit of the old West come alive. Refuge employees must use extreme care in handling the animals--longhorns are not gentle and exhibit many traits of wild game. Old steers seeing a man approaching on horseback usually make a break for the timbered areas and others in the herd follow. Once the cattle begin to run they seek out the highest, most rugged parts of the range where the horsemen find it difficult to drive them out.

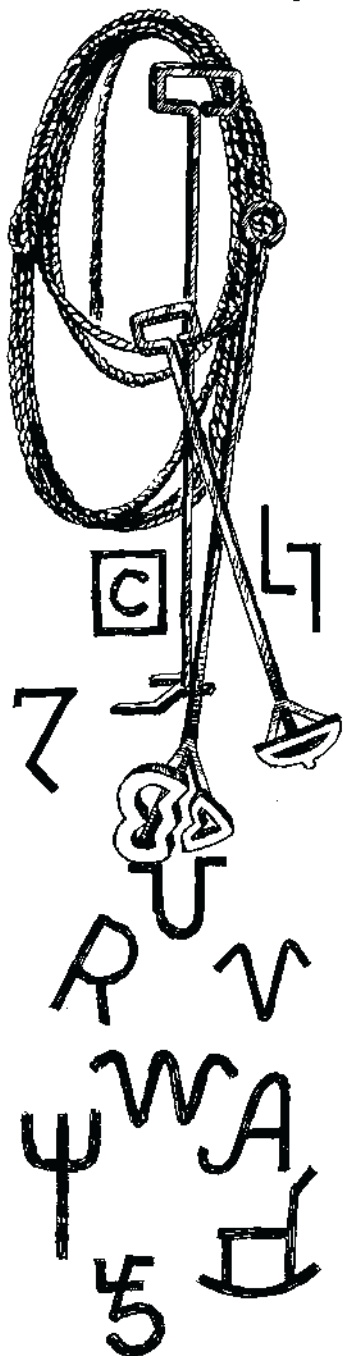
Thus, when the cattle must be brought into the corrals, they are located early in the morning by motor vehicle; then the men load their horses in trailers and approach the herd as close as possible without being seen. After saddling up, the horsemen approach the animals through the timber and push them to a fence where available, along which they are moved. The horsemen cannot come too close to the longhorns because of the danger to both rider and horse from the horns. When driving the herd, a rider usually precedes, and as a lead steer falls behind the horse, the herd settles down and begins to move along behind him. Riders flank the moving herd to prevent straying or breaking away and other riders bring up the rear.

Another Herd Established

The outstanding success with the longhorn herd on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge and its great attraction for the many thousands of visitors that come to the refuge each year influenced the Fish and Wildlife Service to establish these cattle on similar range in Nebraska. Consequently, the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, along the Niobrara River, today is the home of a growing herd of longhorns that numbers nearly 200. The cattle range over 7,500 acres of native prairie grasses and wooded breaks. This herd has the same fine qualities that characterize the Wichita herd. The purpose of both herds, in the words of a former refuge manager at Wichita is to "maintain a cross section of the old-time Texas cattle, ranging from calves to old patriarch steers."

The Fort Niobrara herd got its start in 1936 with arrival of six calves from the Wichita Refuge--first of a number of such transfers. Because of limited range, this herd has in the past been kept to less than 150 animals, but with the addition of 5,000 acres of new range, plans call for doubling this number in the future. Similarly, the annual calf crop of 35 to 40 should at least double when the herd reaches this larger figure.

Springtime is a busy season on the Fort Niobrara Refuge. The new calves must be weighed, ear-tagged, and registered; the steers driven to their summer



range in the breaks along the Niobrara River; and the cows put in the breeding pastures with the sire bulls. Yearling heifers are isolated so they will not be bred--to let them mature before they begin to calve,

A small group of the best longhorns--those with the greatest horn spread and most characteristic colorings--are kept near Refuge headquarters in an exhibition pasture during the summer months. Here, visitors are assured a sight of the animals and can photograph them more easily. At this time the rest of the herd is spread over the sprawling refuge on the summer ranges.

Managing Longhorns on the Refuges

Long years of careful management produced the fine herds that visitors to the Wichita and Fort Niobrara Refuges see on the ranges. Management of the herds has as its objectives: develop and maintain herds that show the finest longhorn characteristics in body type, color, and horn growth; and keep the herds within the carrying capacities of their ranges to avoid overgrazing and damage to the ranges.

Through the years great care has been used in the choice of the herd or sire bulls; and from these bulls, their progeny has inherited many fine traits. Consequently, at both refuges the animals have excellent color range and true longhorn body form. Now the emphasis is on developing horns of superior form and size. Only calves showing good horn growth for their age are retained in the refuge herd.

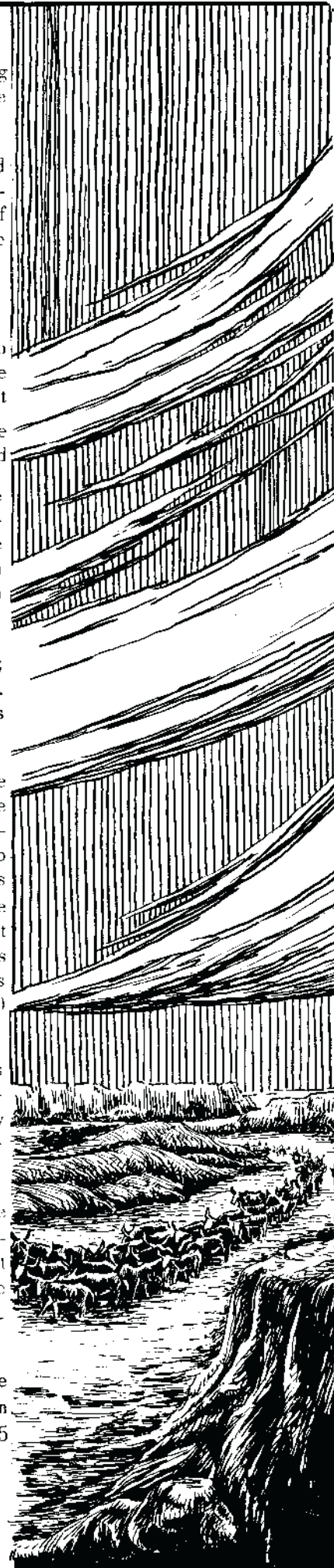
To protect the ranges from overuse, the Wichita herd is kept to 300 animals; the somewhat smaller Fort Niobrara herd is being increased to a similar number. Longhorn management must take into account that each refuge also supports herds of buffalo, deer, and elk.

As early as 1931 the Forest Service began to dispose of longhorns at the Wichita Forest. That year 20 animals were sold for a total of \$429.50. The animals were disposed of that year because they did not meet the rigid specifications set for the herd. But in later years, they also sold animals to keep the herd from becoming too large for its range. Some of the surplus animals were donated to zoos, parks, and other public institutions, and others were sold at public auction. This policy is still followed. The records show that 1,512 animals have been sold alive from the Wichita herd in the 22 auctions held on the area between 1931 and 1964. From these sales the United States Government has received nearly \$200,000--an excellent return on the \$3,000 invested in the original herd in 1927.

The Wichita longhorn auctions have aroused great interest and attract buyers from many parts of the country. It appears that the longhorn has become something of a status symbol--a bit of the Old West showing through--and many ranchers want a few of the slab-sided, great-horned animals grazing on their ranges.

Bidding is spirited at these auctions, and when an especially desirable animal enters the ring, bids go up. Prices for 6-month-old calves have exceeded \$450; cows have brought as much as \$525 and bulls, \$750. The highest price paid for any animal was \$800 for a prize 17-year-old steer. The average prices paid are somewhat less, however. Each year several animals are donated to parks and zoos.

Although surplus animals have been auctioned off at the Fort Niobrara Refuge since the 1940's, public interest in the sales has grown in recent years--as in 1962 when notice of the pending longhorn auction attracted 90 buyers. The 35 head they purchased netted the U. S. Treasury \$9,095.



When the herds on the two refuges reach the desired size, annual disposals will be approximately the same as the year's calf crop. Most animals are sold alive. All breeding animals sold at the public auctions have been TB tested. The heifer calves and cows also have been tested for brucellosis or vaccinated against it. Veterinarians from the Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture handle this phase of the annual roundup.

Other Longhorn Herds

About the time the U. S. Forest Service was seeking animals for the Wichita herd, cowman J. Frank Dobie was assembling a small herd for the State of Texas. Today, the descendants of these first animals can be seen in their 500-acre pasture on the Fort Griffin State Park, near Albany, Texas. The herd is small, numbering less than 20 head, but easily accessible to Park visitors.

Through the years, ranchers in various parts of the country have kept small herds of longhorns. Some of these herds originated from the early-day herds, occasionally injected with new blood from animals purchased at refuge auctions; some herds got their start from the refuge surplus sales.

The number of private breeders has grown--as has the interest in longhorns--to the extent that a national organization to perpetuate the breed was formed in 1964. The first annual meeting of the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association was held in Lawton, Oklahoma, in September 1964. The Association's by-laws provide for registering the animals, recording their ancestry, and preserving the breed undiluted by mixing with domestic cattle.

Thus, the saving of this interesting relict of the Southwest's early cattle industry for posterity is a testimony not only to the efforts of the Federal Government, but also of the State whose name it bears and many private ranchers around the country.

Should you want more information on the longhorn, the following references may be helpful--

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