

Nebraskans create showcase for producers

By Shelia Stannard

Imagine a show without show halters, show sticks and cans of black paint. No fitting chutes are allowed in the aisles, and the announcer reads about your operation while a panel of three judges looks at your entry. You've just imagined the Nebraska Angus Association Pen-of-Three Show.

The 2001 event, conducted Nov. 17 in Broken Bow, marked the show's seventh year. Forty-five pens -- including 23 registered Angus, 10 Red Angus and 12 commercial pens -- competed in various divisions.

"We were looking for a fun way to get together at the end of the year when the calves are weaned and the harvest's done," says Ken "Dutch" Dethlefs, one of the show's founders and past president of the Nebraska Angus Association. "It's a good way to end the year."

The first three shows were in North Platte, and a number of purebred producers in the area helped organize the event and gather support from area businesses.

When scheduling conflicts occurred, the breeders moved the show to the Custer County Fairgrounds in Broken Bow. They say they haven't regretted it. The staff members at the fairgrounds go out of their way to help the producers, and local support has been tremendous. The Red Angus Association became involved when the move took place.

Although the show is a competition, Dethlefs says the purpose is to allow breeders to show their cattle to the public and other breeders. As show announcer, Dethlefs reads a description of each operation as it runs its entry into the ring before the judges. He says it's a way to promote each herd, the herd's history and program.

"Some breeders showcase gets (a group of progeny of one animal) of a new bull here. We want to get these cattle out in public," he says.

As each entry (either a pen of three or a pair) enters the ring, a three-judge panel evaluates the animals. The judges are given any expected progeny differences (EPDs) that are available on the animals. After each entry in a class is presented, the entries are penned. The judges will go to the pens and look at the animals when making their final decision. Ribbons, prizes and premium monies are awarded.

Dethlefs says the event is not a fund-raiser, and once all expenses are paid, the exhibitors will receive premium money back from their entry fees.

Seedstock producers are encouraged to pay the entry fees for their commercial bull buyers so they can further promote their progeny.

As the show continues to grow, the Nebraska Angus Association looks for ways to get more spectators. Jennifer Svoboda, the association's secretary/manager, says it plans to move its Select Female Sale in 2002. The sale, usually during the Nebraska State Fair, will be conducted in conjunction with the pen show, although the events will remain separate, she says.

Dethlefs says by moving the sale date later when more sales are taking place, he thinks there will be more interest in marketing cattle and more people will be looking for show heifer prospects.