

CATTLE SITUATION

This is NOT a market report, but is information that is important to note as you enter into the summer roping months. In an article a few months ago we put out notice that there is a big issue concerning the salvage prices of roping cattle and it would be felt in the roping community at some point. It appears that time has arrived and we want to provide a few answers before you ask the questions.

As a point of fact, for those of you not associated with the cattle business, the large packers basically set the price of beef in this country. Late last fall they put out notice that roping steers salvage prices would be discounted this year. Basically, in the past, packers had accepted older Mexican steers with their horns off, even though many were over their age limit. The domestics are problematic, because they stay small and don't fatten well. Either way the price discounts were put in place and now are being applied. This means with supply and demand raising prices, the gap between purchase and sale is getting wider all the time, which spells disaster for performance cattle owners. In addition, on both sides of the border, roping cattle breeders are putting commercial bulls on their roping cows.

There are actually three different scenarios that exist with roping cattle today: Contractors who lease cattle, contractors who own cattle, and contractors who breed and own cattle. Those contractors who lease are already paying higher per-run prices, and can't be picky about the mixture of quality. Those who have traditionally owned their own cattle and produce ropings, are having a hard time finding cattle to purchase or buy for replacement, not to mention nearly a 30% reduction on salvage. Those who breed, own and produce, are weighing whether it makes sense to stay in the market where their profit line is reduced tremendously. The loss of at least a half dozen high volume roping cattle owners, like the Twisselman's and Flake's, is definitely being felt.

Team Ropers will continue to call and complain that the contractor is not sorting as good as he once did, will start rumors about producers having bad cattle, giving too many reruns, etc. And of course some will shout-out, "my money is hard earned and that commission was too high for that steer." The associations and producers are bracing for more of this. The dichotomy is that in this situation roping cattle options are diminishing, while their rental prices are going up. That is a reality to contractors and an abstract concept to those ropers who correlate commission on a steer by steer basis.

Add-on ropings for the WSTR are becoming an issue. We realize the contractors need to make a profit by maximizing entries for the weekend and we also realize they want to give ropers opportunities without age caps, but add-on ropings put additional stress on the good cattle, which reflects in the main divisions of a qualifier. Finding an agreement with our contractors on the divisions of their events is not always easy. Most ropers don't realize add-on ropings are not "WSTR" qualifiers, and when a roper calls to complain, it is hard to explain that the add-on with last years' cattle was not actually sanctioned.

There are going to be solutions to these issues to keep you roping and as happy as possible, but the solutions are going to be spotty and vary state to state. Things will definitely get worse before they get better, and like COVID, there may be a new normal. If you are wondering about the advent of Muley ropings, hopefully, now you are starting to understand. You will begin to see more and more of these type ropings cropping up. It is just "one" solution to our packer problem, and you, as ropers, should prepare yourselves for the growth and usage of non-horn cattle. You have seen them at some of our major events, add-on ropings and now we hope you understand that there may be more. Many of you are already practicing on them, and it shouldn't be too much longer until the roping schools will begin to teach roping and handling Muleys.