

Don Jobs, Jr., Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

When first approached by Bob Kropp to attend and be a part of the National Steer Symposium, I was reluctant to commit myself; however, after much soul searching and deep thought, I decided this symposium could be most valuable to the industry as a whole.

Traditionally, steer shows have been the real glamorous publicized art of the major livestock shows. This fact alone should serve to make this symposium a highlight of this year's activities and plans for future livestock shows. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and commend those of you here in Oklahoma for the concept and the foresight and energy to develop the program.

As most of you know, the junior steer sales and shows in Houston, have been worthy of national publicity and attention. I say "sales and shows" because it is obvious that the sales being of great magnitude are what have created our magnificent steer show. We have developed in Houston a tremendous rapport with the consuming public through our very special and elite Steer Auction Sales Committee.

The 1982 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo put over 600 steers into lockers and deep freezers for consumption purposes. The Grand Champion Steer sold for \$127,000.00. We had 14 breeds of steers in our show and sold 414 steers in our premium sale. As with all shows, we have our problems with the steer show. We limit entries to one steer per exhibitor. Our Junior Steer Show, by the way, is limited to Texas youth only. Entries in 1982 in our Junior Steer Show for the 14 breeds was 2,061, 1,345 arrived, 223 were sifted and 414 were placed. We have no way of knowing if individuals have entered more than one steer in our show under two or three different names, even though we do have a good state certification program. We have traditionally had problems with age determination of steers. This is something that has not been addressed much today, but is very important as far as type, class, size and scale is concerned. We have had tremendous problems, in fact one of our problems in 1981 was a rumor that the Champion Hereford Steer had his temporary central incisors wired into his jaw. So Mr. Mike McCray, our Assistant Livestock Manager went to the packing house, got the head, boned it out and of course, nothing was wrong.

The use of drugs and/or Lasix, artificial coloring and all types of things that alter the conformation or appearance of a steer should be stopped. We haven't done this yet in our steer shows, but year before last, in cooperation with Texas A&M and

their Vet School, we pulled blood from lambs in our junior show. Of course, it came back that blood samples were not the way to discover the use of Lasix in an animal. We found that out pretty quick. Recently we have taken urine samples from the top placing pigs and one of the samples came back from Texas A&M conclusively that one of the pigs, the 1st place lightweight cross-bred barrow, had a very high incidence of Lasix in the urine. We have barred that particular exhibitor and his family from showing in Houston again, so we do believe in what you are saying. We think that we have got to stop the illegal use of drugs and it is a great possibility that we may collect urine samples from steers in 1983.

We, at Houston, have continued to classify our steers by breed and weight within breed even though many other shows have combined breeds or cross breeds into one classification and established classes by weight breaks only. And, of course, now there is a possibility that the trend will be towards class breaks by measurement rather than weight. As mentioned earlier, we in Houston have continued to show our steers by breed. It is our feeling that with the steer shows being so visible, breed identity is probably better established in the minds of the general public through the steer shows than through the purebred breeding cattle competition. We also all know that we must have pure breeds in order to produce cross breeds and that the pure breeds must be efficient meat producers in order to produce cross breeds of desirable quality. This brings me to one of the greater problems that we in Houston are now facing and that is the problem of classifying steers by breed. This problem is so great that our State County Agents and Vocational Teachers Show Committee addressed it in their comments to the show managements at our annual Spring meeting. Consistent classification of steers is one of our major problems and classifiers with children showing steers of the breed they are to classify should not be allowed to work. Only junior exhibitors should be allowed to walk steers through classification and classification should be on breed character only and not be based on breed data as to sire and dam on the entry card.

Prior to the advent of the exotic breeds and infusion of their blood into the traditional European breeds of cattle, we did not have problems with classification. The reason being that the national breed associations sponsored steer shows through premium support and very freely sent staff personnel to the shows to assist in steer classification. At present, some of these associations have changed their outlook, erroneously in my opinion, and will not support the steer shows from their national office and will not provide staff personnel to assist in

classifying. As a result, state association and regional associations have begun sponsoring the steer shows and are send breeders to the shows as classifiers. As most of you know, it is difficult to use a purebred cattle breeder as a judge or in our case to classify. Their personal interest in blood lines within breeds and likes and dislikes as to breed characteristics and in our case possible personal involvement where so much money is concerned, affects their decision. Last year in Houston we had 2 breeders, I think, come down and I am not going to mention the breed but it was a smaller steer breed in our show, not too many in numbers. They classified out all the good steers and left their own kids with steers in the show. That is why the county agents and Ag teachers said don't use that type of person. I'm serious, this happened. Of course, we almost had a protest but our rule is that we will not accept protests on classified steers so that nobody could really protest the thing. And you know that came as a pretty big shock. Two years ago we had another breed that come to Houston. The steers for the most part had shown in San Antonio the week before and because of our sale and we know this because of the big money in Houston the Breed Champion steer, the Reserve Champion steer, the 1st heavy weight steer, the 2nd heavy weight steer, the 1st light weight steer and maybe the 2nd light weight steer in this particular breed did not sell in San Antonio. They came on to Houston. The same classifiers that classified in San Antonio classified the steers and kicked them out at Houston. So as you can see it is difficult to use a purebred cattle breeder as a judge or in our case as a classifier. We don't really like that system and we are hoping that somehow out of this information that we could get a point across to some breed associations that it is important that we have somebody at the steer shows if we are going to have breed classes and we may be wrong, we may should be showing steers by height rather than breed but we feel like that breeds are important. As you can see these classifiers have their personal interest in bloodlines within breeds, likes and dislikes in breed characteristics and in our case possible personal involvement where so much money is concerned.

The problem now is if we want to continue with steer shows by breeds is, how do we classify or divide steers into breeds in a manner that is fair and equitable to all? My suggestion might be that the purebred associations who have dropped support of the steer shows review their position and reconsider the fact that the steer shows may be the best means of breed promotion and education to the public as a whole at their disposal. I have always felt that the breed associations should continue to be involved in livestock shows, well I don't think we could exist without them and I feel that the Houston show has attempted in many, many ways to cooperate in making the breed shows more appealing to the public. I also feel that the steer show, as has been brought out this morning,

has a direct effect on purebred cattle selection and breeding programs. I think that's been evidenced by what has happened with the advent of the new breeds.

The other solution that comes to my mind for the classification problems we are faced with today is for the classifiers to be more lenient in their breed character criticisms. I feel sure the breed associations are interested in maintaining breed classification in the major shows. This is evidenced, not only by the continued support of most of the associations with premium money, but also by the fact that there are special awards given by eleven different breed associations to the Champion Steer in Houston should he be recognized as one of their breed. For example, the Grand Champion Steer in Houston in 1982, after selling for \$127,000.00, received a \$1,000.00 award from the American Maine Anjou Association and following the Show, the exhibitor received \$2,500.00 from the American Black Maine Anjou Association. In addition to this, the American Black Maine Anjou Association has run full color ads with the picture of this steer in promoting their breed. One of which is in this month's "Cattleman Magazine", full page. We all know that this steer probably carried almost as much Angus breeding as he did Maine Anjou. We also know that he could have carried some Chainina breeding. The point I am trying to make is that a black steer could very well represent the Angus breed even though an animal husbandman could detect strong signs of other breeding.

In closing, I think it only right to point out that I would hate for us, as professional entities in the livestock industry and as educators, to lose sight of the fact that the junior steer shows are for the young people and that our place is in the development of programs that will teach fair play in business and competition as well as the many technical aspects of livestock production through feeding; and the shows through their sales contribute to the development of future livestock producers and leaders in agriculture.

#### The Reaction Panel

##### 1. Club-calf Industry - Jerry Adamson, Cody, Nebraska

I will be the first to admit that I don't have a y slides or prepared material for this. I didn't feel it was appropriate since we were on a reaction panel. I just sort of scraped the crap off of my boots and came on down to Stillwater and listened in on all of the presentations this morning and I thoroughly enjoyed it and it was a very educational experience. It seems to me that so far at this symposium the underlying theme as this day progresses has been to back up both in weight and frame score. From a commercial man's standpoint and that's where it

all begins, gentlemen, if the commercial man doesn't make money then, I think we all would agree that we probably won't have any cattle to feed or steers to show and if we are talking about backing up in weight and frame score, I think we are making a very serious mistake. I think that maybe a lot of us have missed the point. We maybe taking for granted the steers we see in the shows. Admittedly some of these cattle are approaching being too big but I think we are kind of taking for granted that all the commercial cow herds of this country have all been doing some constructive genetic improvement in their programs for the last 10 years and this is simply not true. I venture to say that 70 to 80% of the commercial producers in this country haven't changed a thing. They have just now begun to find the bigger framed breeding animals within their own breed. Some of them are crossbreeding, of course, and some of them are thinking about it. I think it would be real serious to leave them with the feeling that we are going to back this whole thing up. Bearing in mind that 80% of the commercial cows are still weaning a 350-400# calf and all producers (a large percent of them aren't making a dime, in fact their fixed costs are going up every day and they sell their cattle by the pound) have got to sell is their grass and the best way that they can merchandise their grass is through cattle. If we start backing this thing up I think the commercial producers of this country are going to become a lot smaller in numbers. We have got to wean bigger calves and we need to have bigger females to have the bigger calves. In turn, these steers are going to grow, gain and do all the things we talked about this morning. I really hate to criticize the cattle of tomorrow for having the ability to grow. I think this is an excellent opportunity. Everyone has a few little things that they have in the back of their minds and I guess I'm going to take this opportunity to bring some of these things out. Relating back with the shows for just an instant, I would like to direct this at the show officials, not only the ones that are here but all show officials. I believe that within our industry we have people from all segments of the industry that are qualified to judge these major shows, both from the standpoint of experience and knowledge. Just because someone is a packer or a producer, that shouldn't exclude him from having an opportunity to judge the major steer shows of this nation. I guess I'm really supposed to be talking more about club calves than just the feeder aspect but I don't think we can separate the two. I think if you have got a program and are raising the right kind of feeder cattle, the club calves will sort of take care of themselves. Anybody that's geared up to raise fast growing, high yielding cattle will have a few club calves. If you adjust your program strictly for club calves, you probably are making a serious mistake because you're going to have to merchandise the females, the lower end of these steers and the club calf thing will take care of itself if you have a good program. I feel that the steer we have set up as our ideal for the past few years can be reproduced. I'm not say that we can't improve

on him but I'm saying that the steers that have been put up the past few years really are pretty economical for all segments of the industry. I think that the producer can make money with them, the feeder can make money with them and I know the packers can make money with them. So I hate to see us change something just for the sake of changing. I think this has been done in the past by certain groups deciding, "Hey, we've run on this track long enough, we better do something else." I hate to see that because you can't change your breeding programs fast enough to keep up with the trend. So if there are some changes that need to be made, let's make them. But let's not make changes just for the sake of changing. I have a few figures I will run by real fast. We keep all of our heifers, sell all of our steers as calves and we breed a lot of the heifers so that the yearling heifers that we sell the following year are the low end of our heifer calf production. In February, last year's yearling heifers were killed in Nebraska. They were fed in Nebraska and I got the kill sheet back on these cattle dated February 8. There were 119 of these heifers, mostly 2 and 3 way cross heifers with an Angus base. One hundred fifteen were yield grade 1's and 2's, four were 3's and no 4's. Seventy-three percent of these cattle graded choice and averaged 1000 lbs. They may not be the ideal but people can make money with those kind of cattle.

Back to the club calf thing, I think the club calf producers have made their commitment to the youth. Honesty and integrity has been talked about many times this morning. This is very important as club calf producers. These kids and their fathers and mothers come out to select calves in the fall and it's certainly our responsibility to represent the cattle as they are, as the breed they are, the age they are and then stand behind the cattle if there should be any problems. I think that is our main commitment as club calf producers. It was mentioned earlier about the prices paid for club calves. I know sometimes there are some outrageous prices paid but I also know that it costs a lot to set up the program to try and produce the right kind of cattle, hopefully that will win major steer shows. When you go out and select bulls out at the bull sales and you figure your time, the extra things that you do, these \$3000-\$4000 steers aren't high and if you don't believe us, just set up a program of your own and try to produce some. They're not too high. As the gentlemen reiterated this morning, I would sure would rather have my boy or girl grooming a steer rather than spending the same amount of money on a hot rod or motorcycle or not know where he is at or who with. There is no way to put a dollar value on responsibility, growing up and the 4-H and FFA experience.

Again I sure want to thank you for the opportunity to be here this afternoon and will look forward to visiting with some of you later.