

A Marketer's Dream



PHOTO BY JD ROSMAN

The National Western's Angus Carload & Pen Show generates exposure in the historic Denver stockyards.

by JD Rosman

A brisk Denver breeze greets Robert Hamilton as he crawls out of his truck and steps foot into the Yards. He has traveled more than 1,000 miles from his home in Canada to exhibit Angus cattle at the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo.

Before the sun rises, Hamilton and his crew divvy up responsibilities to prepare their Angus bulls to compete in the famed NWSS Carload & Pen Show.

For the past eight years, Hamilton Farms has brought cattle from Cochrane, Alta., Canada, and for the first time the Hamiltons are exhibiting both a carload and a pen of bulls, hoping to attract cattlemen to their sale. As sale season approaches, breeders like Hamilton experience a one-track mind focused on customers — bringing back repeat buyers and attracting new ones to take a look at their available genetics.

“Being involved in Angus, with it being the largest breed registry in Canada and the U.S., it is nice to come down here to see what genetics are available to enhance our program, and at the same time, we like to bring our product down to display to a grander audience,” Hamilton said.

Down in the Yards at the National Western, there's always a buzz of activity.

Set to greet potential buyers, the Hamilton Farms' pen is equipped with heaters, a trusty Crock-pot®, a chronically empty coffee pot and plenty of sale books showcasing their best Angus genetics. Their cattle have been sorted countless times and spent hours in the barn being prepared for their day in the sun,

► **Right:** “In Denver, you see so many cattle and so many different bloodlines, there is no greater place to be to see what's happening in the industry,” Robert Hamilton said.

which could just as easily become a day in the snow when it comes to the Denver climate.

Unique to the Yards at the NWSS, the



Western Stock Show



PHOTOS BY DALE HEIKES

► **Above:** “The Pen and Carload Show allows breeders like myself to evaluate cattle which we could potentially buy,” said Elizabeth Nixon, a young Angus breeder from Rapidan, Va.

► **Left:** On the day of the show, livestock enthusiasts flood the arena in the Denver stockyards to watch as the panel of judges evaluates each exhibitor’s offering.

Carload & Pen Show attracts Angus breeders from across the country who showcase their highest-performing and the most uniform set of genetics they have to offer.

“Our cow herd is relatively small, consisting of about 300 cows,” Hamilton said. “By bringing a carload of bulls we are able to show off the consistency of our herd, and that’s quite a feat in itself.”

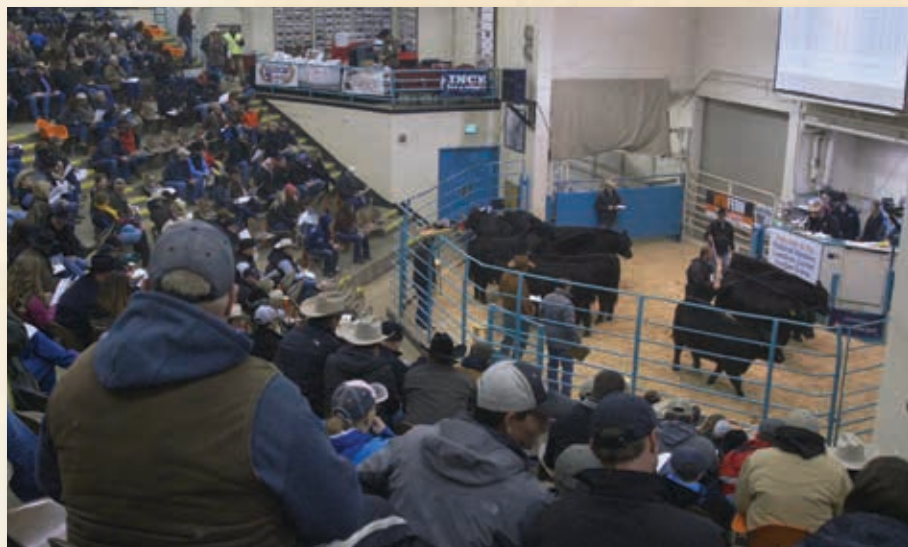
During the Carload & Pen Show, Angus bulls and heifers are evaluated on their production power phenotypically, as well as genetically. Hamilton and other breeders spend months feeding, gathering data and training their cattle before making the decision on which pen of three or carload of 10 head creates the most consistent and best offering.

“In Denver, you see so many cattle and so many different bloodlines, there is no greater place to be to see what’s happening in the industry,” Hamilton said. “We get more people through our pens here than we would at any other show in a week.”

Prior to the Carload & Pen Show, this year hosted Jan. 14, cattle are on display throughout the Yards, open for cattlemen and women to



PHOTO BY JOSH COMINELLI



view pedigrees and the lineups in person. This is a marketing dream each year and an opportunity for seedstock breeders to showcase their elite genetics. It also provides an opportunity for potential buyers to learn each operation’s specific and unique philosophy and goals to see which fits their operation best.

“Customers are key,” said Bill Conley of Conley Angus Farms near Clarksdale, Mo. “We get all four corners of the country to come to this show, and you never know who you might meet, develop a friendship with and maybe a new customer.”

Top genetics on display

On the day of the show, livestock enthusiasts flood the arena in the Denver stockyards to watch as the panel of judges evaluates each exhibitor’s offering. With hardly an open seat, ranchers, with data sheets in hand, watch class after class and division after division, as quality Angus genetics funnel through.

“The Pen and Carload Show allows breeders like myself to evaluate cattle which we could potentially buy,” said Elizabeth Nixon, a young Angus breeder from Rapidan, Va. “It is always important to look for the next latest and greatest sire out there in order to stay ahead of the curve.”

The walls inside the National Western Livestock Center are covered in photos of past breed champions from throughout the

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Carload & Pen Show’s history.

“History surrounds the ring and trends are set here,” Nixon said. “You look on the walls and see when cattle started small, then got big in a hurry and now see we are moderating them out, but each change has taken off here in Denver.”

Throughout the show, those sitting ringside are invited to attend breeders’ sales and ranches, adding to the publicity and level of exposure breeders are looking to gain by spending time at Denver.

“It is advantageous for us to come out here and bring bulls to get them out in the public eye for people to see what our program is about,” says Rob Fanning, manager at Werner Angus near Cordova, Ill. “Having uniform bulls and showing the quality of what we’ve got at home is a good representation of what will be in our bull sale, and will hopefully get us some prospective buyers.”

For nearly 75 years, Angus breeders have met in Denver for the National Western, showing the best the breed has to offer. Whether competing down in the Yards or up on the Hill, each breeder is vying for the championship title, but even more importantly, the handshake of a fellow cattleman.



Editor’s Note: *Angus Media’s 2016 communications intern, JD Rosman is an Angus member and continues to contribute to Angus Media communications.*