

An All-Around Herdsman

An old-fashioned cowboy wins Herdsman of the Year honors.

Story & photos by *Corinne Blender*



Hard work, commitment and tradition have made Brad McCurry, Mount Hope, Kan., a winner in more ways than one. His peers recognized him at the 2002 National Western Stock Show (NWSS) for one of his most recent accomplishments — Herdsman of the Year.

The award is voted on by fellow herdsman and is presented to one individual each year in recognition of accomplishments throughout that individual's career of showing cattle.

"It doesn't matter if you're fitting cattle or if you're playing basketball or football — whatever you're doing, if the guys that you are working with or the guys that you admire think enough of you to vote for you, it's a really nice honor," says Craig "Ernie" Wallace, Mount Vernon, Mo.

Wallace says McCurry's camaraderie with his friends, his desire to help others and his ability to present cattle are among the reasons he is deserving of this award.



A traditional cowboy

Wallace met McCurry on the show road more than 15 years ago. They've been friends ever since.

"He doesn't just sit at the show barn and brush on cattle. He's kind of an all-around type of herdsman — more of a throwback to a traditional ranching cowboy."

His "throwback" style comes from a family tradition of raising Angus cattle that originated in 1928 in south central Kansas. McCurry Bros. is truly a family-run enterprise that has more than just show cattle. The operation consists of nearly 9,000-acres and includes a diversified farming enterprise and 500 registered Angus cows.

Although his main responsibility includes taking care of the show string, McCurry's commitment to his family's long-lived success doesn't end there. "Besides what he does on the road at the shows, he has also got a full slate at home," Wallace says.

"He shows cattle, but he has also got to get on a horse every day to check cows and help his brothers take care of the cattle," Wallace says.

Being part of a true family operation is the key that helps make his part of the job possible. He says his wife, Kay, who puts up with a husband who is on the road a lot, deserves credit as well as his children, sons J.W. and Grady and daughter Kami. Grady works with his father at the shows. McCurry also attributes the family's success to his brother Geoff, who stays at home to take care of the herd,



► Above: Brad McCurry celebrates the NWSS win with his son J.W.

► Left: Judges Quintin Smith and Tim Fitzgerald named Sedgwick's Lass 5810 reserve grand champion female of the Roll-of-Victory Angus show. Brad McCurry exhibited the heifer, which was bred and raised by McCurry Bros., then purchased by Casey Blew, Mount Hope, Kan.

and his other brother Greg.

McCurry is known for his ability to present cattle to their fullest potential, Wallace says. And he is no stranger to the winner's backdrop through his years of showing.

McCurry fed and exhibited Sedgwick's Rebar, who won champion Angus bull at the All-American Angus Breeders' Futurity, the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) and the NWSS (the "Triple Crown"), through the 1996-97 show season. Rebar has been the only animal to win all three events since 1983.

McCurry also fitted and showed the reserve grand champion female, Sedgwick's Lass 5810, at this year's NWSS.

"He's been doing it for a long time and has been very deserving of the Herdsman Award for a long time," Wallace says.

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► Brad McCurry (left), Mount Hope, Kan., was named Outstanding Herdsman Jan. 14 at the 2002 National Western Stock Show Annual Angus Herdsmen Banquet. Presenting the award is James Fisher, American Angus Association director of activities and junior activities.



► McCurry accepts the honor, which was determined by ballots cast by his peers in the barns.

PHOTOS BY ROD WESSELMAN