

# NWSS Potential Move

NWSS promises to honor its heritage in a possible relocation.

by Kasey Miller

There is quite a bit of history surrounding the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver, Colo. In 1906, a time when sirloin brought 10¢ a pound and meatpacking centers were largely located in Kansas City, Mo., and Chicago, Ill., the NWSS was formed to allow Western stockmen a place to show, buy and sell breeding stock and to encourage meat production in the West. Today, it still has a reputation of excellence, and it is the only stock show that has a pen-and-carload competition and the option to keep cattle on the Hill or in the Yards.

This historic show attracts 600,000-650,000 visitors during its 16-day run in January, and it accomplishes all of its shows and attractions on only 95 acres, says NWSS President and CEO Paul Andrews. However, a need to expand and a potential threat of I-70 moving have posed some uncertainty as to the future location of the event grounds.

## Difficulties and potential threats

In 2001, the National Western Executive Committee received a warning that I-70 was possibly relocating, which would result in the interstate curving over the top of the NWSS grounds, Andrews explained. There is a lot of potential risk in that, so the National Western Executive Committee, together with the city of Denver, started looking into alternative options for the stock show. I-70 is still a threat today, and Andrews said that a decision should be reached this summer on whether the interstate will continue in a straight line or curve over the fairgrounds.

Even without the threat of the interstate moving, other factors make maintaining the show at the current grounds difficult. Andrews pointed out the current difficult parking, in addition to three rail lines and a new light rail stop within the next two years that will cut a path through the center of the grounds, effectively taking out 30 horse stalls.

Additionally, while the grounds and buildings do have such a rich history, that also means that the buildings are old, and becoming obsolete with new technology. Many of the buildings are more than 100



PHOTO BY MATTHEW ELLIOTT

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years old, and even the newer buildings (built in the 1950s) are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

Andrews mentioned that some maintenance is nearly impossible now because many of the parts are no longer made. The lighting system in the Events Center showing, for example, is no longer made, so finding parts to fix anything is a real challenge.

## New possibilities

To address these difficulties, the National Western executive committee developed a business plan with several options and sent it to the mayor, including a few options in Denver near the international airport and one in nearby Commerce City, plus an option of expanding the current grounds if I-70 doesn't move. He added that some options are still being developed that haven't been submitted, so it's a continual process, but they are working closely with the city of Denver.

“It is our vision to get us to a site and complex that will give us a footprint of 300 acres,” Andrews says. Currently, the show attracts 600,000-650,000 visitors, but the

business plans validate that a million visitors could be achieved with a new facility.

With the possibility of new facilities, advancements could be made to make the grounds more competitive: A new 10,000-seat stadium to host rodeos and year-round events; a new 3,500-5,000 seat event center to host horse shows and year-round events; a new livestock hall to show cattle and do year-round trade and consumer shows; and 18,000 parking spaces to accommodate consumers, including RV parking.

## Maintain history

One of the most unique things about the NWSS is the Yards. If a new facility location is chosen, Andrews assures that the historical appeal of the NWSS grounds will be taken into consideration.

“It is our job to recreate and honor the historic appeal of this show. The Yards are the centerpiece of what we do, they are the most important aspect,” Andrews explained.

With the many considerations that go into such a large decision, he said the projected timeline for a possible new facility or adding to the current facilities is at least five to seven years down the road. Options are still being considered, though, so showmen can still expect to stall on the Hill or in the Yards for the next several years.