



Why Texas Longhorn Cattle?

By Russell Hooks

In my thirty five plus years of breeding, preserving and promoting Texas Longhorn cattle I have been ask numerous questions about the breed. However I would have to say the most often asked question is “why do you raise Longhorns”. This question is not a simple single answer but rather a question with multiple answers which I am going to share with you in this article.

First off, they are one of the easiest breeds of cattle to raise and do not require a lot of cattle knowledge or experience working with cattle. One of the factors that make Longhorns a “no hassle” breed is their natural resistance to numerous diseases and parasites. Longhorns seem to have a natural immunity developed over centuries of having to make it on their own with little too no help from mankind. This translates into fewer veterinarian bills and less maintenance cost for an individual choosing to raise Texas Longhorns.

Another reason as to “why Longhorns” is their browse utilization. Longhorn cattle will take advantage of whatever type of forage is available thus requiring less supplemental feed to maintain an adequate body condition. Most Longhorn cows weight less than 1200lbs which means less cost to

maintain the cows. They also put less stress on your pastures by their lower forage requirements and by their willingness to consume different types of vegetation. This allows the rancher to possibly increase his carrying capacity, which increases the number calves produced thus increasing the potential profits.

Adaptability is another good reason for raising Longhorn cattle. Unlike many of the other cattle breeds the Longhorn thrives in climates from the hot, damp coastal regions to the harsh cold of the far north. Longhorns are not only raised in the US but in Australia, the Netherlands and Canada. They will thrive in almost any environment.

When considering a breed of cattle to raise and own, production is a key factor in making a breed selection. Longhorns excel in the two very important production traits, fertility and reproductive efficiency. These are two very solid reasons for “why Longhorns”. The Longhorns fertility is exemplified by the breed’s ability to breed at a young age, then to breed back quickly after calving and calve into their teenage years. Longhorn cattle have been known for their reproductive efficiency for many years, which has been a key to their survival. They have a larger pelvic opening than most breeds and low birth weights which almost guarantees a live calf at birth. This also means no sleepless nights sitting up waiting to see if you’re going to have to help with the delivery of the calf or call the vet.



Longhorn cows will not only deliver a live calf but a good Longhorn cow will generally wean a calf that weights at least 40-50% of cow’s weight at weaning. This is a good example of the Longhorns efficiency in production and is another benefit of raising Longhorns over other breeds of cattle.



When most other breeds of cattle are being culled from the herd at the ages of 6 to 8 years of age a Longhorn is just hitting its prime. Longhorns are known for their longevity which is another sound business reason for raising Longhorn cattle. Texas Longhorns will breed and calve well into their teen years with some continuing into their twenties. Their longevity results in more live calves over the years and means more dollars in the producer's pocket. It also means that fewer replacement heifers need to be retained for the herd.

We have covered some of the business reasons for “why Longhorns” but now let's discuss some of the more personal reasons for choosing Texas Longhorns. For some folks it is the history and nostalgia of the legendary Texas Longhorn that first catches their interest. After all the Texas Longhorn is one of the main symbols of the old west and stirs up images of cowboys, horses, cattle drives, big ranches, cattle barons, outlaws and gunfights. When you think about it the cattle drives which moved Longhorns that were roaming free in Texas up the trails to the northern market places were actually laying the foundation for our current livestock market. Today's cattle industry was built by the Texas Longhorn and the American Cowboy. The Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America (TLBAA) was established in 1964 to preserve the genetics and history of the Texas Longhorn cattle which were near extinction. Today the TLBAA registers between 5000-6000 head per year.

As you look at a lot of today's breeds of cattle you will find that most are very similar in look and type almost like they came from the same cookie cutter mold. Most breeds are working to have this consistent look in their cattle. But it is the uniqueness of the Texas Longhorn that draws some people to the Longhorn breed. They are all truly one of a kind because no two are alike in color, body or horn shapes which makes for a beautiful pasture setting.

As you spend time around Longhorn cattle you will soon learn that they all have their own individual personality which makes them a joy to be around. They are a very intelligent breed with a good memory and are easy to train and work. They will respond to positive treatment or handling in a positive way but will



also respond in a negative way to rough or negative treatment.

The Texas Longhorn is basically a good all-around breed of cattle because they are a multipurpose breed. They will work for just about anyone from the serious cattleman to the recreational rancher. Prospective buyers can find cattle that will fit their budget, lifestyle and goals. Whether your goals are to produce flashy color on your cattle, twisty horns or the longest horns you will be able to find cattle at an affordable price to help you achieve your

goals. You can even raise Longhorns for meat. Yes, I am saying you can eat Longhorns. Most people at first are surprised by the fact that you can eat Longhorn meat. They are generally more surprised to find out how tasty it is and that it is healthier for you. Longhorn beef is some of the healthiest meat you can eat. It is lower in cholesterol than chicken and turkey. If you need to watch your cholesterol or calorie intake you may not have to give up eating beef if you start eating Longhorn beef. Healthy beef for your family is another reason as to “why Longhorns”.

If you are looking at getting involved in raising cattle, adding to your cattle operation or looking to raise beef for your family’s table then you should take a serious look at the Texas Longhorn Breed.

How meats compare nutritionally

(Information based on 3.5 oz. serving)

Meat	Calories	Protein (gms)	Fat (gms)	Cholesterol (gms)
Ground Beef	289	24.1	20.7	90.0
Lean Ground	272	24.7	18.5	87.7
Chicken, dk	205	27.4	9.7	93.8
Lamb Chop	216	30.0	9.7	95.8
Pork Loin	190	28.6	9.8	79.6
Pork Chops	202	30.2	8.1	82.7
Lamb Leg	191	28.3	7.7	89.7
Pot Roast	210	33.0	7.6	101.0
Venison	207	33.5	6.4	4.0
Turkey	170	29.3	5.0	76.6
Top Round	180	31.7	4.9	84.6
Chicken, Wht	173	30.9	4.5	85.7
Longhorn	140	25.5	3.7	61.5

Source: Longhorn data: "Nutrient Density of Beef From Texas Longhorn Cattle; Texas A&M; 1987. Other data: USDA, USA Today 11/29/91, Pope Lab, Inc., Dallas, TX

About the Author:

Russell Hooks has been involved in breeding, raising and showing Longhorn cattle since 1980. He comes from a cattle raising family. He is the fifth generation of his family to be in the cattle business. He is also a well known and respected Longhorn cattle judge having judged at numerous State Fairs, Affiliate Shows and The National Championship Show. Russell also owns and operates Russell Hooks Longhorn Marketing and Consulting Service which allows him to put his 30 plus years of experience to work for new and established breeders. He also provides helpful and educational information and articles on his website www.longhornroundup.com. He and his wife Felicia live in Jonesboro, Texas where they raise and maintain a small Longhorn herd which is focused on straight Butler Longhorn Genetics. Their herd is home to several champions including the 2012 TLBAA Reserve Grand Champion Mature Non-Halter Female.