

March 2019 TLBAA Director Report - Deb Lesyk

Many of you know of me, I have been in the Longhorn industry for over 30 years. I am originally from Nebraska and came to Saskatchewan in the 70's and started my adventure with the Longhorns in 1988 with my partner, Dwight Overlid. I was the first Region 1 representative for Canada at the TLBAA table and established many connections through the association. I have always been interested in the Affiliates as they to me are the back bone of the association and continue to drive the breed forward. Throughout the years we have shown cattle successfully at events in Canada as well as in the United States. As part of the ATLA Board I was involved in the Canadian Circuit where for several years we awarded specially designed bronzes to the overall winners of identified classes. This Circuit was well recognized by our friends in the states and through us they began to try some of the ideas that were successful up here. The TLBAA Prince and Princess was developed as an idea up here and given to the TLBAA Affiliate Committee to further develop. That venture has resulted in a competition that is well supported by a variety of TLBAA affiliates across the United States, Canada and Australia. The Year End awards were also re-designed as previously, the Board picked the winners and my proposal of it being membership driven was accepted by the national board and continues to improve each year. The last contest that I was fortunate to develop for the Affiliates was the Colorful Calf Competition that you will read about in the March TRAILS. Each of these events are mentioned as they were developed for all members, not just those that showed cattle or measured horns, we wanted activities that included everyone that owned a registered Longhorn and belonged to the TLBAA. For me, it hasn't been about my cattle winning, but the promotion of the breed I raise, and the people I have been able to work with across the world. Certainly we have had our cattle recognized. Saltgrass originated at our farm and was sold to a breeder in Texas who showed him extensively on the show circuit and he was a World Champion, and continues to be one of the original bloodlines that is still being shown successfully in the States and Canada. To me, his legacy has been a highlight of our years of breeding, and even this year three granddaughters of his have been sold to the states to be shown.

The biggest challenges facing the industry right now is developing a new mindset about Longhorn beef. The value of our beef is still not appreciated in the cattle industry and our market is very selective.

Times have passed about the rangy beef we once saw on the old westerns, and yet that's the picture that many people still see when Texas Longhorns are mentioned. Our industry continues to be divided with horns strong for some, and the conformation part for others, and yet in Canada we have the best combinations of those two features. Recently in Texas at the Ft. Worth Show I overheard a group of judges discussing the breed and one commented that "if you want to see complete packages of the breed, you need to go to Canada and judge a show." That's a pretty great comment coming from Texas. I know right now the long cold winter has many worried about feed and the possibility of another dry year and sale averages weren't that great at the end of 2018. In 2019 all of us need to support each other, respect each other and promote the breed.

As the New TLBAA Director Region 1, I have challenges ahead of me...one is the DNA program that is being discussed and its' implications for Canadian breeders. I am not against it, but I want to know that we can use a Canadian facility that is compatible with the state's facility. With our exchange on the dollar it just means additional costs for us if we have to send our samples stateside. I have asked for a Canadian member to be on that committee and the final members have not yet been decided. There is a new beef promotion committee that I have also asked to ensure that Canada is included in the plans as well as Australia, as Region 1 includes Canada and Australia. I have found the Americans to have a narrow vision on many projects and quick to forget that the association is made up of other countries paying the same dues and expecting the same service. If nothing else, I will become the Director that continually hounds them to think about what are the implications for other countries if new policies are put in place without consultation. I will say the new TLBAA Chairman of the Board listens and thinks things through before responding and I feel good about his leadership style.

And the other big issue is the downsizing of the TLBAA Board and combining Region 1 and Region 2. I am against this, have stated at the meetings that combining Canada and Australia with the northeast United States will do nothing for our members. The countries outside of the US need to have representation, not lumped in with a portion of the country we have little involvement with most of the time.

I hope that when you are asked to vote on downsizing the board of directors that you will comment that combining Region 1 and 2 is not a good idea and that if that is to happen, you will vote against the downsizing.

As members of the TLBAA, what I would ask of you is that you continue to promote registered cattle, that's one of the ways to keep the breed

strong. Also don't use sales as dumping grounds for something you don't want or like. Our sales need to continue to be top of the line and our consignments, strong cattle that will improve the breed. As a breeder I know it isn't easy to can a beautiful longhorn, but if there are traits that shouldn't be sold to others, that's your only choice. Be reputable and do sell some of your best.

Lastly, the two TLBAA affiliates in Canada need to work together to be one united voice when there are concerns facing us from our registry or within our region. Planning successful venues need support from both affiliates. Be open, share ideas, share plans and ask for input from each other's affiliate. In a time of great technology a quick survey of all TLBAA members in Canada could deliver the information required. Keep up on the TLBAA news, sign up for the Friday E-Trails and ask questions if something just doesn't make sense.

Thanks for the opportunity to share some thoughts with you.
Deb Lesyk