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NEWS RELEASE

10-Day Beef Highlights from the 2009 Calgary Stampede



The International Livestock Auctioneer Championship, the Alberta Fed Beef Expo and the UFA Steer Classic were some of the beef-related highlights of the 2009 Calgary Stampede. Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary — The 2009 Calgary Stampede's beef-related competitions and exhibits were rated the way many folks like a good steak: Well done.

Steers or heifers, Simmental or Shorthorn, beef cattle have played a critical role in the success of the Stampede ever since The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth was established in 1912, and this year's edition was no different.

The 21st annual International Livestock Auctioneer Championship, which saw the sale of nearly 2,300 cattle between July 10 preliminaries at the Olds Auction Mart and the July 11 final under the Big Top, was won by Paul Ramirez of Tucson, Ariz., in a 10-man duel that didn't leave much breathing room. Shawn Gist of

Gibbons, Alta., was the runner-up.

"It went extremely well, and it was really close," says Wayne McKinnon, chair of the Stampede's International Livestock Auctioneers committee. "We always have a strong contingent of finalists, but this year it was very, very tight. It took a little longer than usual to tabulate the scores, because things were so close."

The UFA Steer Classic, held on July 11 under the Big Top, saw a 1,319-pound beast owned by Colby McLeod, 17, of Cochrane, win the top prize of \$10,000. The Vermilion Group of Streamstown, Alta., was reserve champion with a 1,393-pound animal that had just claimed top prize at the Lloydminster Steer Show two days earlier.

The bovines were purchased by the Chicago Chophouse and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Landmen, respectively.

"In my opinion, this was the best steer show we've had to date," says Roger Davis, chair of the Stampede's Steer Classic committee. "What made it very exciting for us was, we introduced a Junior class this year (for entrants aged 20 and under) to get youth more involved -- and our overall champion (McLeod) ended up coming from that class."

The future of agriculture was also prominently on display during the four-day International Youth Livestock Show, which saw nearly 80 youths from Canada and the U.S., aged nine through 20, exhibit 125 animals while demonstrating their stewardship and marketing skills in one of four species classes. More than \$26,000 in post-secondary scholarships was awarded to 25 of those future industry leaders.

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"In the last two years, we've seen a steady increase in the commitment of our youth," says Rob Smith, a member of the Stampede's International Youth Livestock committee. "Because of the scholarships, this event does have a tendency to be the ultimate event for them."

"They all show up in their best bib and tucker, with their best projects, and bowl us over every year," adds Smith. "Not just with the quality of the animals they have on exhibition, but with the skills and talents that their experiences have obviously brought to them."

"It's pretty easy to put on a cow show or a sheep show. But to be a great showman, or to have the best marketing skills, or to have the decision making and critical thinking ability to be a great judge, those are things that are completely the members' own."

The Alberta Fed Beef Expo, a commercial show for pens of five fat, market-ready cattle, operated alongside the International Livestock Auctioneer Championship, and saw an increase in entries over 2008. The Fed Beef Expo's grand champion pen of steers title went to Kolk Farms Ltd. of Iron Springs, Alta., while the grand champion pen of heifers was owned by Andy Rock and Ed Strunks of Delia, Alta.

"The quality of cattle was there. It was a very consistent group of cattle," says McKinnon. "The judges who tabulated the scores said it was the tightest they've seen in quite a while."

The Beef Cattle Showcase, which spanned the entire 10 days of Stampede '09, gave exhibitors from the purebred and commercial industries a chance at promoting, networking, and sharing with the public the significant value and impact the beef industry has on Alberta's well-being. Nearly 40 per cent of the Canadian beef herd is based in Alberta.

Meanwhile, International Livestock Congress 2009, hosted by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Stampede and the International Stockmen's Education Foundation, was held July 10 at the BMO Centre's Palomino Room, with discussions including international economics, global demand and the forces shaping the beef cattle industry.

"I think there's a lot of potential in Canada. I think we have the best cattle in the world," says Wayne Hanson, chair of the Stampede's Beef Cattle committee.

- 30 -

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The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit www.calgarystampede.com.