



BY RACHEL ENDECOTT, BEEF CATTLE SPECIALIST

COW SENSE CHRONICLE

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MSU EXTENSION AND MSGA ANNOUNCE 2016 STEER OF MERIT CERTIFICATIONS

Montana State University Extension and the Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) distinguished 106 “Steers of Merit” out of 924 entries for 2016. Out of 612 steers entered in the Carcass Division, 69 were deemed Steers of Merit. In the Ultrasound Division, 37 out of 311 entries received the distinction.

The exhibitors and breeders of the top five steers in each category were honored at MSGA’s Annual Convention, Dec. 7-9 in Billings at the Radisson Billings Hotel. The top five steer entries in the Carcass Division were: 1) Kaleb Probst, Beaverhead County (Probst Livestock, breeder); 2) Reese Meine, Beaverhead County (Reese Meine, breeder); 3) Layne Boeh, Park County (Terry Reuter, breeder); 4) Sara Malesich, Beaverhead County (Malesich Ranch, breeder); and 5) Madeline Hamilton, Missoula County (Two Creek Ranch, breeder).

The top five steer entries in the Ultrasound Division were: 1) Brighton Lane, Montana Fair (Dr. Bryan Roe, breeder); 2) Tucker Turbiville, Fallon County (Tucker Turbiville, breeder); 3) Beau Bromenshenk, Montana Fair (Bromenshenk Farms, breeder); 4) Tate Thompson, Montana Fair (breeder unknown); and 5) Isabelle Lowry, Montana Fair (Probst Livestock, breeder).

The number of Steer of Merit certifications for 2016 decreased by 2 steers, with 21 more entries submitted compared to 2015.

The Montana Steer of Merit program was initiated in 1967 as a joint effort between the Montana Stockgrowers Association and Montana State University Extension. The program was designed to measure, record, and improve carcass characteristics in beef cattle. Data from these carcasses has been summarized and analyzed statistically. Over time, significant increases have been made in quality grade and in yield grade, or cutability, indicating that cattle can be selected for leaner carcasses with higher cutability and still maintain high quality grade as reflected by marbling.

To be designated a Steer of Merit, carcasses are evaluated by a qualified individual using information that relates to yield of lean meat and eating quality. Beef carcasses must meet criteria set by the Steer of Merit Committee in the areas of hot carcass weight, dressing percent, fat thickness over 12th rib (back fat), total rib eye area, yield grade, percent cutability, and quality grade. Computer software programs help compile data and rank carcasses for state and county awards. Data is also analyzed periodically to track genetic and feed management progress. The minimum standards for Steer of Merit are reviewed each year and the program is updated to meet the changing industry standards.

For more information about the Steer of Merit program call Megan Van Emon, Montana State Extension Beef Cattle Specialist at (406) 874-8286.

HEROES AND HORSES SEEKING HAY DONATIONS

Heroes and Horses (www.heroesandhorses.org), a non-profit organization based in Manhattan, MT, provides extreme expedition-style horse pack trips that teach self-reliance, teamwork and perseverance to combat veterans. The MSU colt starting class has a unique service-learning opportunity to work with this organization in starting some BLM feral horses to be used by H&H. Dr. Shannon Moreaux is seeking near-to-Bozeman hay donations for the horses while they are on campus starting in early January. He is willing to come pick hay up at your location and is happy to accept large or small squares or round bales. If you'd like to donate some hay or funds to this worthy cause, contact Shannon at 406-579-3997 (cell) or moreaux@montana.edu