

MSU Extension and MSGA announce 2022 Steer of Merit certifications

Megan Van Emon, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, Montana State University

It was great to be back in Billings and present the Top 5 winners at the Montana Stockgrowers Association Convention on December 8th. We presented the Top 5 winners of the carcass and ultrasound steer of merit contests at the Best of Beef Luncheon.

Montana State University Extension and MSGA distinguished 154 “Steers of Merit” out of 1,288 entries for 2022. Out of 555 steers entered in the Carcass Division, 78 were deemed Steers of Merit. In the Ultrasound Division, 76 out of 734 entries received the distinction. The number of Steer of Merit certifications for 2022 declined slightly compared to 2021. More counties continue to participate in the ultrasound contest this year due to the lack of packing plant facilities and space.

The top five steer entries in the Ultrasound Division were: 1) Kayli Cook, Montana Fair (Vanek Club Calves, breeder) 2) Sy Carda, Richland County (Brent Carda, breeder); 3) Dani Hess, Montana Fair (Shay Family Livestock, breeder); 4) Dallas Berkram, Marias Fair (Diamond Box Livestock, breeder); and 5) MaRae Smail, Marias Fair (Dunbar Brothers, breeder).

The top five steer entries in the Carcass Division were: 1) Shelby Taylor, Lake County (Shelby Taylor, breeder); 2) Ladahlia Hook, Flathead County (Toby Hook, breeder); 3) Colton Noyes, Broadwater County (KD Cattle Co, breeder); 4) Samuel Simonson, Phillips County (Shon Simonson, breeder); and 5) Isaac Eaton, Prairie County (Frank Eaton & Sons, breeder).

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), 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.