

## SECTION G, CONSERVATION

### Longhorn Cattle Weights and Horn Measurements

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Longhorn cattle are generally recognized as a type or variety of the common cow (*Bos taurus*). Dobie (1941) described the characteristics, origin, and history of the longhorn.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, longhorns were largely replaced by better beef breeds. In 1927, U. S. Forest Service officials, wishing to perpetuate this symbol of western Americana, assembled a herd of twenty-seven animals from southwestern Texas. The cattle were brought to the Wichita National Forest in the Wichita Mountains of Comanche County, Oklahoma. The herd prospered and is now under the administration of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

With the exception of prize animal records, few weights and horn measurements of these unique western cattle have been recorded. The purpose of this paper is to record these data for the longhorns of the Wichitas.

The horns continue to grow for many years, and when steers are closely penned, care must be exercised to prevent horn breakage. As a result, Wichita records of measurements and live weights are not numerous.

Each longhorn on the refuge carries its own numbered brand. A card has been set up for each animal, giving its lineage, date of birth, and other data. These cards have been a source of much information. In addition, an effort has been made during the past three years to weigh and measure as many cattle as practicable. The active cooperation of refuge personnel in this project has been invaluable and is gratefully acknowledged.

The heaviest steer weighed, tipped the scales at 2045 pounds when he was ten years of age.

Live-weight records of bulls and cows are scarce. A three-year-old bull weighed 1090 pounds and a four-year-old weighed 1245 pounds. A five-year-old cow weighed 1045 pounds and an eleven-year-old weighed 1125 pounds.

It must be remembered that these range cattle were grass-fed. No concentrates are supplied except to sick or aged animals. All bull calves not saved for breeding or sale are castrated as calves.

Steer horn-lengths are much greater than those of either cows or bulls. There are two principal methods of recording horn length: tip-to-tip (pole measurement) and total length of horns. Tip-to-tip measurements are naturally shorter than length-of-horn figures. Under normal range and corral conditions, lengths along the horns are difficult to secure on live cattle. Where listed (Table II) they were secured from dead animals.

Table I  
Longhorn Steer Live Weights

Age (Yrs.)	Average Weight (lbs.)	Spread of weights	Number Weighed
1	602	584 — 620	2
2	750	—	1
3	1070	—	1
6	1435	—	1
7	1533	1530 — 1535	2
9	1870	—	1
10	1886	1540 — 2045	5
13	1645	—	1
14	1620	1530 — 1710	2
15	1300	1220 — 1380	2
16	1463	1410 — 1515	2
17	1450	—	1
18	1500	—	1
Total Number Weighed			22

Table II  
Longhorn Steer Horn Measurements

Age (Yrs.)	Tip-to-Tip Measure (Inches)	Total Horn Length (Inches)
2	31½	41¾
8		72½
10	74	
10	73	
13	50	
14	64	82
15	55½	77
15	58	
16	68	
17	57	
18	57¾	

The longest tip-to-tip was 74 inches; the best measurement secured along the horns was 82 inches (with a 64-inch tip-to-tip). Dobie (1941) recorded an exceptional steer with a pole measurement of 8 feet, 7¾ inches. This animal was a rarity, even in the heyday of the longhorn.

Horn measurements of a few bulls were secured. A mature bull raised in Mexico had a tip-to-tip measurement of 34½ inches. A four-year-old measured 31½ inches tip-to-tip and 59 inches along the horns. A five-year-old animal measured 29 inches tip-to-tip.

Cows have lighter-built horns than either bulls or steers. The Wichita herd includes many cows having horns that twist and spiral upward. The horns of a seventeen-year-old cow spanned 43 inches tip-to-tip.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Dobie, J. Frank. 1941. The longhorns. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1-379.