

Origin of the Texas Longhorn Herd at the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, Nebraska

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The recent (1964) organization of the Texas Longhorn Cattle Breeders Association of America attests to the growing interest in this historic breed and prompts me to record in some detail the origin of an important Federal herd in northern Nebraska. Once on the trail of neglect to extinction, Texas Longhorns are now estimated to number between 3600 and 4000 head.

The herd at the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge was founded in 1936 with stock from the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Subsequently all outside additions to the herd have come from the same source. The Niobrara Refuge, founded in 1912, is located in the Niobrara River Valley, Cherry County, Nebraska. This 19,122-acre area, as well as the Wichita Refuge of southwestern Oklahoma, is administered by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

Ruth (1938) outlined the history of the Fort Niobrara Refuge and mentioned the start of the Longhorn herd. This paper presents a complete listing of Wichita cattle shipped to the Nebraska refuge. The information was taken directly from individual Longhorn card records in the Wichita files. Ages given in Table I are in years at time of shipment.

Of the six animals in the first shipment in May, 1936, one was a steer. The remaining five, one bull and four cows, can be considered herd foundation animals. Since 1936, twenty more Wichita Longhorns have been added.

On October 5, 1965, twenty Niobrara Texas Longhorns were auctioned at the twenty-fourth annual sale held at the refuge corrals five miles northeast of Valentine, Nebraska. At present (December, 1965) the herd contains 180 head: 3 bulls, 61 breeding cows, 13 yearling heifers, 65 steers, 36 1965 calves, and two 1965 Wichita bull calves (Table I).

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TABLE I. COMPLETE LISTING OF WICHITA TEXAS LONGHORNS TRANSFERRED TO THE FORT NIOBRARA REFUGE

Date	Brand	Sex	Age	Color and Other Notes
5- -36	173	Bull	2	Red & white speckled—Raised on Wichita
" "	159	Cow	2	Red & white speckled—Raised on Wichita
" "	160	Cow	2	Brindle—Raised on Wichita.
" "	170	Cow	2	Lt. Red w/roan on belly—Raised on Wichita.
" "	176	Cow	2	Plain red & white—Raised on Wichita.
" "	118	Steer	4	Red (as a calf)—Raised on Wichita.
11- -40	261	Bull	1	Brown—Raised on Wichita.
" "	283	Bull	2	Red, some white on belly—Raised on Wichita.
11- -44	5	Bull	3	Black. Bought from J. C. Clower. Source, Mexico.
" "	13	Bull	3	White & red spotted. Bought from Clower. Source, Mexico.
4- -54	776	Bull	5	Dark blue, white lineback—Raised on Wichita.
" "	962	Bull	2	Grulla, white forehead spot—Raised on Wichita.
" "	1080	Bull	1	Yellow—Raised on Wichita.
11-13-58	1134	Bull	9 (est)	White, red neck & shoulders. Bought 2-4-54 from I. G. "Cap" Yates.
" " "	1559	Bull	½	Red & white spotted. 1958 calf. Raised on Wichita.
" " "	1562	Bull	½	Red w/white markings. 1958 calf. Raised on Wichita.
7-10-62	1156	Bull	8	Blue. Weighed 1500# 7-10-62. Raised on Wichita
" " "	1815	Bull	1	Yellow & white spotted—Raised on Wichita.
" " "	1813	Bull	1	Brindle, white on belly. Killed 7-6-65 in fight with another bull. Raised on Wichita.
" " "	1830	Heifer	1	Yellow—Raised on Wichita.
" " "	1836	Heifer	1	Black—Raised on Wichita.
" " "	1839	Heifer	1	Red & white spotted—Raised on Wichita.
9-19-63	1931	Bull	1	Yellow w/white pts. & white lineback. Born 1962. Raised on Wichita.
" " "	1913	Bull	1	Grulla. Born in 1962. Raised on Wichita.
9-17-65	2212	Bull	½	Brown w/white belly. Wichita-raised.
9-17-65	2213	Bull	½	Red w/white spots on forehead. Wichita-raised.
Total		26		

LITERATURE CITED

- Ruth, Clara. 1938. Fort Niobrara Game Preserve. USDA, Bur. Biol. Surv. Wildl. Res. Mgmt. Leaflet B S-109 (mimeographed).