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**Contact:** Ashley Patterson, [ashley.charanza@tamuk.edu](mailto:ashley.charanza@tamuk.edu)

### **KRIRM Ranch Management Symposium Discussed Practical Stockmanship with Cattle Handling Demonstration**

KINGSVILLE, TEXAS (Oct. 31, 2016)—The King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM) hosted a successful symposium on Practical Stockmanship in Ranching that attracted more than 300 ranchers, landowners, and agriculturalists from 21 states, Mexico, Canada, and Ireland to Kingsville, Texas, Oct. 20-21, 2016.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Holt Cat® Symposium on Excellence in Ranch Management hosted professionals from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, board certified veterinarians, and ranch managers and owners from diverse operations that shared their expertise on cattle handling topics.

#### **Keynote and Academia Presentations**

Shawn Darcy, Associate Director of Market Research for NCBA, outlined consumer perceptions on production practices and animal welfare. While he noted that nearly two-thirds of consumers recently surveyed felt positive about the way beef is raised, the most concerning topic out of 12 topics surveyed was animal abuse/inhumane treatment. Darcy also explained that consumer concerns and emotions on areas such as foodborne illnesses, inhumane treatment, hormone use, and overall suspicions of the beef production cycle decreased after watching a beef lifecycle video that portrayed all segments of the beef industry and the steps taken by the industry to ensure the humane treatment of the cattle.

Other speakers on the symposium agenda included KRIRM faculty member and Paul C. Genho Endowed Chair in Ranch Management Rick Machen, Ph.D. Machen discussed the impact of stress and handling on cattle performance, explaining that research concludes low stress handling contributes to animal and handler welfare, improved animal performance, improved carcass merit, and greater consumer confidence in the industry. Lee Creech, a KRIRM graduate student, illustrated cost comparisons between large and small facilities. Creech showed attendees how to correctly evaluate the long term feasibility of rebuilding corrals versus new construction options.

#### **Veterinarian and Ranch Manager Perspectives**

Perspectives from two board certified veterinarians also offered further insight into cattle handling topics. Randy Hunter, DVM, advised attendees on the most productive ways to handle cattle, giving tips for controlling the horse, keeping speed to a minimum, entering the pen to help another worker, moving several animals, trailer loading, and settling cattle. Bob Smith, DVM, discussed the best management practices for castrating, dehorning, and euthanizing, citing BQA guidelines. Smith summarized by advising attendees to consider the cattle's well-being, employee safety, safety of the beef supply and the impression husbandry practices have on consumers.

Industry professionals shared their knowledge from direct experiences with cattle handling on the ranch. Decky Spiller, Division Manager for Silver Spur Ranches in Colorado, described how employee education impacts the entire process. He cited 10 guiding principles that employees should adhere to in order for the operation to be sustainable, both fiscally and ecologically. Michael Archibald, General Manager for Deseret Cattle & Timber in Florida, shared his experience implementing change in cattle handling. Through employee training, BQA certification, onboarding with new employees, and regular meetings, Archibald explained the change in cattle handling resulted in calves settling quicker, a decrease in cattle injuries, employees more committed to improvement, and a heightened awareness on cattle handling. Jason Peeler, owner of Texana Feeders in Pleasanton, Texas shared similar experiences about his success in changing the way cattle are handled in the feedyard.

#### **Low-Stress Cattle Handling Demonstration**

The symposium concluded on Friday afternoon at a low-stress cattle handling demonstration led by cattle handling experts Ron Gill, Ph.D. and Curt Pate. Both Gill and Pate handled a set of Santa Gertrudis heifers on King Ranch horses,



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demonstrating the process from acclimating the horse and cattle to the situation, penning the cattle, working the cattle on foot, and to finally loading the cattle in a trailer. The overall message during the demonstration was the importance of teaching cattle to trust the handler, respond to pressure and use their instincts to accomplish the intentions of management.

An industry trade show of 28 vendors offered attendees an opportunity to network with agricultural lending and supply/service companies supporting the ranching industry. A prime rib dinner honored 23 individuals who completed the requirements for the Texas Farm Credit Certificate in Advanced Ranch Management. To earn the certificate, the individuals representing six states completed four KRIRM lectureships and two symposia within a three-year period.

### **About KRIRM**

Formed in 2003, KRIRM is a ranch management master's program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville created to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the legendary King Ranch. As the only ranch management master's program in the world, KRIRM teaches graduate students using a multi-disciplinary, systems approach to ranch management, and provides the highest quality lectureships and symposia to stakeholders in the ranching industry. The programs serve the ranching industry by empowering graduate students and outreach attendees with skills that will enable them to strategically manage complex ranching operations and successfully lead our industry. Graduates of KRIRM manage livestock and wildlife on over 4 million acres of rangeland. For more information about KRIRM, and the master's and certificate programs, visit [krirm.tamuk.edu](http://krirm.tamuk.edu).

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