

Yuma cattleman gains stature as judge at big cattle shows

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With eight cattle shows already under his belt this year, Alex Dees of Yuma has to figure he is reaching the top of his profession — a professional cattle judge.

Dees, who owns and operates C and D Brangus in the Bard Valley, has just returned from judging the Brangus Cattle Show at the New Mexico State Fair in Albuquerque. On Sept. 24, he'll be at the Tulsa, Okla., State Fair for the Open Brangus Cattle Show.

A veteran of 29 years in the Brangus cattle business, Dees got his start with Floyd Newcomer at the Yuma Valley Cattle Co. in 1960. It was Newcomer and the Bruce Church Company with Al Face as cattle superintendent that began the raising of Brangus in the Southwest. Dees has been in business for himself for many years and recently merged his Dees Brothers Brangus with the Canta Rana Ranch of the Julian area.

Of his success on the judging circuit, Dees says, "You can't go

to school to be certified as a judge. It is a matter of being accepted. That is, accepted by the cattlemen and the show people. 'Accepted' is a big word. If Alex Dees does a bum job down at San Antonio he won't be invited back. There are very few judges and good judges are hard to find."

Dees feels the big international shows are the best place for being seen. Coming up next for him is the 1989 International Expo-Gus in Chihuahua, Mexico. In early November is another biggie, the American Royal Show in Kansas City, Mo. He'll judge the Brangus there. It is his main breed although he also judges other Brahman influenced breeds.

Recognition plays a big part in his judging status, Dees feels. "As far as I know," he says, "I'm the first black to hit the professional judging world. It takes a lot of years to be accepted."

At his ranch about six miles northeast of Indian Hill, there are some 350 cows, bulls and steers. As Brangus, they are 3/8th Brahman and 5/8th Angus. Raising top-flight Brangus is

Dees' aim. This fall alone he will attend three bull sales where he will consign some of his best bulls.

He has a number of bulls on the ranch. Mature bulls will weigh around 2,200 to 2,400 pounds. A good range bull will bring close to \$3,000 while herd bulls go between \$7,500 and \$10,000.

Others raising or being involved in Brangus in the Yuma area include Ken-Easterday, Al Face, Mark Senini and Jake Colvin. Hank Schechert of the Foothills grows Brangus on his ranch in Northern California. "There are maybe 25 Brangus breeders in the Southwest," says Dees.

The Yuma County Fair benefits from his wide-ranging cattle judging. "I'm able to get some of the best judges to come to the Yuma Fair who otherwise wouldn't be interested in coming to a small county fair."

Consulting on cattle growing and other such matters is another of Dees interests. In the business of consulting there is a lot of travel. "I've made four trips to Hawaii so far," he says with a smile.



Alex Dees at Bard Valley ranch with Brangus cattle grazing in background

Foothills News/Bob Werley