

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912
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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Betty Thompson, betty.thompson@ag.ok.gov, 405-208-2850

Cutting horse show draws more than 1,000 entries

Swiftly and efficiently the horse and rider maneuver to isolate, or “cut,” one cow from the herd. Head-to-head with the cow, the horse must make quick, precise movements to ensure the cow does not return to the herd for the remainder of the competition. This is what you will see at the Non-Pro and Open Cutting Horse Event in Oklahoma City going on now until Tuesday.

The prestigious event, held at the Oklahoma State Fair Park, has over 1,000 entries and approximately 700 horses from all across the United States. It is the largest non-pro and amateur cutting horse event in the U.S. according to Della Hillerman, event coordinator for the show.

“This is our 25th year here since we moved this event from Amarillo to Oklahoma City. It was successful out there, but since we moved the event here it has actually quadrupled in size,” said Hillerman.

Hillerman hails from Tecumseh, Oklahoma, where she rides often with her husband, Greg, who is a professional cutting horse trainer.

Cutting horses begin training early as a 2-year-old and continue the intense training to the end of their 3-year-old year before showing in the industry’s futurity show.

“Their training doesn’t end at that point though,” said Hillerman. “Most horses are left in training the duration of their life, but it’s not the intense training they get the first two years of their life, it’s more of a tune up program to keep them sharp on cattle and zoned in on what they are doing.”

Professional trainer Robbie Boyce of Purcell, Oklahoma, has been training cutting horses for roughly 20 years. He said judges evaluate the horse’s ability to cut the cow from the herd in addition to how well they control the cow once it is isolated.

“It takes a lot of consistency, good cattle, and just like any other athlete, good training and repetition,” Boyce said.

He will compete on Monday and Tuesday with horses ages 4 to 6.

Championship classes will also be held in the mix of the event, where competitors have a chance to qualify for the world title event at the end of the year.

Some of the best cutting horses in the world will perform this weekend, including previous and current world title holders. One thing is evident when watching the cutting events, these horses are athletes.

“They are the Russell Westbrook of horses,” said Hillerman. “They are bred and trained to have incredible agility and movement.”

The show is estimated to have an impressive \$3 million impact on Oklahoma City according to Hillerman. Each horse brings approximately three people, and chambers across the U.S. base the economic impact on hotel accommodations, restaurants, and entertainment the competitors participate in while they are here.

Hillerman said they would love to have a great turn out of spectators on Saturday afternoon, because that is when some of the most impressive horses will compete. Several of them are seasoned horses, some 15 to 20 years old, who according to Hillerman, have won anywhere between \$15,000 and \$1 million.

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Photo caption: Purcell, Oklahoma native Robbie Boyce is pictured with one of his cutting horses outside of Jim Norton Arena at the Oklahoma State Fair Park. The cutting show horse runs through Tuesday.