



Texas Longhorn

Bos taurus

Description: The Texas longhorn is a breed of cattle known for its characteristic horns which can extend to 120 inches tip to tip for steers and exceptional cows and bulls in the 70 to 80 inch tip to tip range.

Geographic Range/Habitat: Spanish cattle were first imported into Texas in 1541. Several breeds were brought to North America for various reasons but mainly as a food source for missions. Some of the cattle were set free to propagate and others escaped from traveling herds. These cattle quickly adapted to the arid environments of the southwest.

Behavior: Free roaming cattle became wild and mixed breeds. They developed long horns and became light-bodied, long-legged and developed for running. They grazed at night and hid during the day. When startled, they would attack men and horses, and would fight wolves and grizzly bears. They would form a circle around the calves and defend them from predators, unlike other breeds which would flee from predators. There was variation in the color of their coats. The Spanish breeds were solid colors. They became an individual breed of their own. Man eventually semi-domesticated them and drove them on trail drives of hundreds of miles. Cowboys preferred to drive the longhorns because they would not bunch up or string out, and they would dodge a man or bluff, unlike other breeds.

Diet: Grasses, vegetation and shrubs, hay and alfalfa

Status: Herds of Texas Longhorns are bred and maintained at several state parks as well as private ranches throughout the state.

