

# Sisters woman raising bucking bulls

By Kathryn Godsiff  
Correspondent

On a recent hot July afternoon, when most residents of Sisters Country were thinking about upcoming July 4th celebrations, 25-year-old Awbrey Cyrus was hauling her small string of bucking bulls to the Sisters Rodeo grounds for a day of training.

With help from an experienced rough-stock contractor, Andy Crozier of Aumsville, Oregon, and her family, Cyrus

bucked out the bulls, assessing their potential and getting them accustomed to the life they are bred to lead.

Bucking bulls undergo training, enhancing their natural ability. Bloodlines and temperament are important, but they also need to be taught to stand quietly in the chutes, for their safety as well as that of the cowboys who ride them, and to not just buck but to spin and do whatever else necessary to get the cowboy into the dirt.

When the youngsters (yearlings and 2-year-olds) entered the chutes, they were fitted with a “dummy,” a 15-pound weight strapped onto the back where a cowboy would sit. It is attached to the flank strap, which lies loosely around the animal just in front of the hip bones. Cyrus held a remote control device that loosened the dummy and flank strap when the bull demonstrated a satisfactory maneuver. Older bulls, such as the four-year-old she brought in, have a rider who either gets bucked off or is instructed to bail in less than eight seconds if the bull performs adequately.

“It’s all positive reinforcement,” she said.

As soon as the weight came off, the bull was gently hazed out of the arena — also part of the training. Good bucking bulls are assertive and a bit wild, and good producers let them be that way. The animals get to know their handlers, and specific training is necessary for everyone’s safety.

This is all very well for the bulls, but what about heifers? Since half an animal’s ability and temperament comes from its mother, it’s important to know if she has what it takes to produce well-performing offspring. Because only bulls

are allowed to perform at sanctioned rodeos, there are bucking futurity and derby events open to all rough stock from yearling to 3 years old. Breeders can assess a heifer’s talent at one of these.

Cyrus acknowledges that she is in a unique minority as a young, single woman in this field. Cyrus bonded with one of her cow suppliers, an older woman from Oklahoma who, like Cyrus, has suffered a brain injury. The woman and her husband are gradually dispersing their herd, and as Cyrus recovered from her athletics-related concussion injury, she gained valuable insight and some really good cows from her mentor.

“I know it will be difficult, but I’m stubborn and I look forward to it,” said Cyrus of the journey ahead of her.

Her interest in the bucking bull industry began when her injury brought a temporary halt to her schooling in massage therapy and agriculture business management. She



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Awbrey Cyrus.



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Awbrey Cyrus’ two-year-old bull Royal Flush being bucked with a dummy at Sisters Rodeo grounds.

suddenly had an excess of time and started to learn about pedigrees and producers, and her passion for the industry grew. Cyrus also raises sheep and comes from a long line of livestock producers, and the support of her family (parents Matt and Kelly Cyrus and brothers William and Alexander) is appreciated.

“They may not understand why I’m (raising bulls) but they’re supportive,” she said.

Next year she’ll be calving 10 cows, and she’s hoping the Sisters Rodeo grounds will see some up-and-coming stars continuing their education on how to navigate the chutes and get rid of the dummies on the next training day.

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