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Red Bluff Bull Sale prices down amid slow recovery from drought

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

RED BLUFF, Calif. — The bull auction here on Jan. 28 fell significantly below last year's receipts but still managed to crack the \$1 million mark in total sales for the seventh straight year.

In all, the 288 bulls that went through the Don Smith Pavilion at the 76th annual Red Bluff Bull and Gelding Sale brought in \$1.1 million — an average of \$3,822.40 per bull.

That fell short of the nearly \$1.49 million that bidders shelled out for 305 bulls last year, when winning bids averaged \$4,816.

Consigners interviewed before the sale began had hoped that the winter's rains would boost prices as ranches began to consider rebuilding their herds after a four-year drought, but they knew the recovery — if there is to be one — is still early.

"It's down a little," Randy Beeman of Cardy Ranches



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Jamie Mickelson cleans up a bull consigned by Santa Rosa, Calif.-based Sonoma Mountain Herefords at the Red Bluff Bull and Gelding Sale. The bull auction Jan. 28 capped five days of activities at the Red Bluff, Calif., fairgrounds.

in Turlock, Calif., said of the cattle market. "Hopefully it'll be a decent average."

Wayde Henderson of Sonoma Mountain Herefords in Santa Rosa, Calif., went in with higher hopes. The ranch had six bulls in the sale.

"It's coming back," he said of the market. "We're doing better since the drought is not

as bad as it was a couple of years ago."

The top-priced bull was a Hereford presented by Y Cross Herefords in Bonanza, Ore., which sold for \$10,500 to BK Ranches in Montague, Calif. Cardey Ranches had the runner-up bull in terms of price, selling a Charolais to Gary Silva of Herald, Calif.,

for \$8,500.

This was the bull auction's second straight decline in total receipts after the 2015 sale netted a record \$1.56 million for 238 bulls.

The bull sale was the last of four livestock auctions held last week in Red Bluff. The bidding began with the ninth annual online feeder and re-

placement heifer sale on Jan. 26, where about 75 lots were sold.

Lot prices in the Western Video Market-hosted sale topped out at \$143 per hundredweight for weaned heifers and \$173 per hundredweight for weaned steers, down dramatically from last year's \$234 and \$252, respectively. The 2015 sale topped out at \$287 and \$299, respectively.

The 69 geldings auctioned off on Jan. 27 generated \$682,750, down only slightly from the \$755,250 brought in last year for 104 horses. This year's average sale price of \$9,895 fell just below last year's \$10,070 per horse.

The high-selling horse in 2017 was bought for \$39,000 by Peter Baldwin of Makawao, Hawaii, and four other geldings sold for \$20,000 or above.

The Jan. 27 sale of 14 cattle dogs fetched a total of \$85,750, an average of \$6,125 per dog. The top dog sold for \$20,000 to El Rancho de Casey in Jarrell, Texas.

Citrus industry encouraged by stay in Argentine lemon rule

By TIM HEARDEN
Capital Press

Citrus industry leaders in California plan to use a routine 60-day stay on pending federal regulations to persuade President Donald Trump's administration to think twice about allowing Argentine lemons back into the United States.



Joel Nelsen

California Citrus Mutual officials were to meet in Washington, D.C., with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service administrator Kevin Shea and members of Congress to voice concerns about the lemons' potential impacts on the Golden State's citrus industry.

The meetings Jan. 30-Feb. 3 follow a letter that Citrus Mutual president Joel Nelsen sent to Vice President Mike Pence and members of Trump's transition team asking for a delay in the lemon rule, which President Barack Obama's administration finalized in December.

California and Arizona citrus growers had chafed over the decision to allow lemons from Argentina that meet certain conditions after a 15-year ban because of disease and pest concerns.

"We're not going to stop Argentine lemons from coming in," Nelsen said.

However, industry leaders hope the talks lead to stricter controls or even a new public comment period, he said.

"We're obligated now ... to express to the new administration why this has to go back to the drawing board," he said.

The USDA won't speculate on what the next steps will be, an agency spokesman told the Capital Press on Jan. 25.

Allowing Argentine lemons to return would be a lengthy process that would involve several layers of verification, according to USDA.

APHIS and Argentina's National Plant Protection Organization, known by the initials SENASA for its name in Spanish, were to finalize a work plan that details the conditions Argentina must meet for every U.S.-bound shipment, she said.

The two agencies also agreed to verify six months of fruit fly data, and APHIS was to also verify that packing houses met safeguarding requirements, she said.

However, the USDA announced Jan. 22 that the lemon rule would be included in Trump's 60-day stay on pending regulations, a move that new presidents frequently make to review the last-minute rules imposed by the previous administration.

"I think there's an opportunity for us to explain to the new administration how and why the proposal as it's written creates vulnerabilities for the California citrus industry," Nelsen said.

Citrus Mutual and the U.S. Citrus Science Council argue the risk is unacceptable considering that the California citrus industry is already fighting the Asian citrus psyllid and the deadly tree disease huanglongbing.

Further, Nelsen said a new public comment period should have been allowed because language in the final rule acknowledged for the first time there could be economic consequences for California packing houses.

The volume of lemons grown in California and Arizona is 497,350 metric tons annually valued at \$647 million, according to USDA. Lemons from Mexico and Chile currently dominate the U.S. import market, shipping an average of 46,376 metric tons annually, the agency reports.



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