

WESTERN Farmer-Stockman®

February 2010

www.WesternFarmerStockman.com



Oregon ag dean visits Iraq

Page 8



Cattle star in auction video

Page 24

Chili recipe helps fight winter chill

Page 45



Bucking conformity

Key Points

- Eastern Colorado ranch raises top bucking horses and bulls.
- Bucking horses may perform until well over 20 years old.
- In 60 years, rodeo contractor numbers grow from 20 to 80.

By GARY HODGSON

MANY agriculture producers seek niche markets to help them succeed.

An eastern Colorado ranch operation has held the fascination of millions nationwide for decades with its unique products and services. With operations in Roggen and Stoneham, Cervi Championship Rodeo has grown into one of the largest rodeo stock contractors in the world.

Mike Cervi, who founded the company more than 60 years ago, says, "Talk to the boys. They're the ones who run it now."

The "boys" are Mike's sons, Chase and Binion, and nephew Scotty Cervi. Binion is the group's senior partner and spokesman.

Viva Las Vegas

While the cowboy lifestyle of eastern Colorado seems an illogical fit with the glitz of Las Vegas, every December hundreds of thousands gather in Vegas for the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo to be entertained by the bucking horses and



WAITING FOR THEIR TURN: Eastern Colorado rancher and rodeo producer Binion Cervi and two of the ranch's more famous residents, Texas Cocktail and Sam T. Straight, wait to dazzle the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo crowd in Las Vegas.

bulls, many owned and raised by the Cervi family.

"In my opinion, bucking horses are the heart of rodeo, and it takes a lot of them," says Binion. "We have about 700 head on the Stoneham ranch;

120 colts are born here each year.

"It takes six years for a good bucking horse to mature, so we send the 3-year-olds to another ranch in Medicine Bow, Wyo., until they're old enough to join

our 250-head rodeo string," Binion explains.

Sharing the 52,000-acre Stoneham ranch are 90 cows, whose best calves join the "traveling team" of 75 to 80 rodeo bucking bulls that are 3

years old or older.

"The bulls usually only buck five to six years," Binion points out, "but we have bucking horses who are still among the best in the world over 20 years old."

Matchmaker

Matching the ranch's 15 proven sires with the proper mare to produce top bucking prospects seems to be Binion's favorite part.

"The first pairings I made at age 19 are joining our rodeo string this year," Binion says, adding with a smile, "You need a lot of patience in this business."

However, Binion has broader plans than just the rodeo. "I want to learn all I can about the business side of rodeo, so I can eventually spend less time on it and more with our cow-calf operation on the Roggen ranch and the family's commercial feedlot near Greeley.

"This is a tough business. We produce some of the biggest rodeos in the country, coast to coast," he says. "There is lots of traveling and more competition every year. When my father began this 60 years ago, there were around 20 others in the business. Now there are 80."

If hard work and love of the business means anything, eastern Colorado's young Cervi trio could be major players in the world of rodeo for decades to come.

Hodgson writes from Brush, Colo.

Register Online
Chance to Win
\$1,000
Cash!

Make it yours
and **WIN!**

We're celebrating our Web upgrades!
Check it out and register on
WESTERN FARMER-STOCKMAN'S
Web site! Go to—
www.FarmProgress.com

*No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited or restricted. Open to active farmers who are legal U.S. residents, 21 years or older. Drawing ends 9/31/10. Complete rules available online. Sponsor: Farm Progress.