



*2010 Live Oak
Legend Award*

*Committed to
Beefmasters*

by Chel Terrell

Longtime Beefmaster breeder, Bill Carr, owner of Hilltop Ranch, has received his share of awards over the years. Sitting in his office at the ranch headquarters near Laredo, Texas, Carr is surrounded by numerous plaques, trophies and other items recognizing his dedication to the Beefmaster breed and his effort to raise quality cattle over the last five decades. Several of the major awards include the prestigious Beefmaster Breeders United (BBU) Breeder of the Year Award in 1993, the 1996 JBBA Helping Hand Award, 1999 Environmental Award and the 2008 Performance Breeder of the Year.

A new honor will be added to this admirable collection this

month as the Live Oak Beefmaster Breeders Association (LOBBA) will present Carr with the 2010 Live Oak Legend Award during the satellite's annual bull sale in Three Rivers, Texas.

"Mr. Carr has been a longtime member of Live Oak BBA," said Rocky Carrillo, Live Oak BBA president. "He has continued to participate in Live Oak BBA sales as a consignor and a buyer. He has repeatedly received awards for the top consigning Beefmaster, has contributed generously to Live Oak BBA fundraising events, and has been an active member of the association. Mr. Bill Carr is truly a legend in the Beefmaster industry."

Carr and his wife of 40

years, Dusty, have a son, Kirk, a daughter, Courtney Baxter, and three granddaughters. They operate Hilltop Ranch from their home between Freer and Laredo and also maintain two other ranch locations, one near Floresville and the other near the Texas Hill Country town of Sisterdale.

"I always wanted to ranch," Carr said, "and I've been fortunate to have a lot of good full-time people work for me over the years – currently Wade Cornelius at the Webb County ranch, Mike Redding at the Hill Country ranch and son, Kirk, at the Wilson County ranch."

Carr purchased his first Beefmasters in the early 1970s from Gerald Hollis in Beeville,

Texas. He was already in the Santa Gertrudis business and was also raising commercial cattle, but South Texas was in the middle of a devastating drought and Hollis was forced to part with some of his premier cows. Carr jumped on the opportunity and bought 129 Beefmaster and Beefmaster-cross pairs and bred cows, all eligible for registration with BBU.

"I really liked the calves that came out of these Beefmaster cows," he said. "From this point I began growing my Beefmaster numbers."

Carr bred the cows to Beefmaster bulls and obtained registration papers on all of them. He also joined BBU during this time and began phasing out of the purebred Santa Gertrudis business.

"I have always been performance-minded, and I had emphasized performance when I owned these Santa Gertrudis. The Santa Gertrudis association emphasized a 140-day gain test at that time, and I had more Santa Gertrudis bulls that had gained over 5 lbs. a day in these tests than anybody other than the King Ranch.

"When I tried to sell about 700 of my Santa Gertrudis cows, I couldn't get what I thought these cattle were worth, so I enrolled all of them in BBU's Upgrading Program and produced them out. At the same time, I was also buying a few purebred Beefmaster cattle at various places and growing my numbers that way."

Performance data and visual appraisal of cattle remain an essential component of Carr's successful operation. Following this philosophy has benefited Carr over the years as he's promoted progeny out of his foundation bulls, Classic Cotton and Cornerstone.

"I've always been desirous of obtaining as many objective evaluations of cattle as I could. I've always participated in and supported BBU's Classification Program, and felt it was beneficial to a breeder to have

a knowledgeable, independent person come look at your cattle and cut out anything that you might not have cut out yourself."

Along with being a staunch advocate of BBU's Classification Program, Carr has also participated in BBU's Weights and Measures Program and is a Merit Breeder.

"I believe that raising cattle is a two-tiered thing," he said. "You have visual appraisal, which you've got to do soon after an animal is born. The classification program helps with that. Equally or more important is to have objective evaluations and good measurements of cattle such as weights, sonograms and pelvic measurements."

As an early proponent of gathering performance information on cattle, Carr really benefited from being a member of a progressive-minded cattlemen's association in his county.

"One of the biggest differences about gathering performance

Pictured at right is a nice Beefmaster pair at the Hill Country ranch. Below, a group of Beefmasters enjoys the lush pasture. The Carrs are currently building a cattle sale facility at the Wilson County ranch near Floresville and have set Oct. 23, 2010 as the date for their fall production sale.



information back then, back in the 1960s, was the equipment," he said. "At that time, there were more beef cows in Webb County than in any county in Texas. We had a progressive county beef cattle association, and what made it unique was the county agent at the time had custody of a variety of equipment that included portable scales and measuring devices, and also included what was then the 'modern' sonogram machine. This has really evolved up to now."

Carr currently utilizes the services of Dr. Lorna Pelton, Pride Livestock Co., for ultrasounding his cattle to determine carcass merit. In the first part of March each year, she, along with a BBU field representative and a veterinarian from Freer, meet Carr at his Wilson County ranch in Floresville to ultrasound, weigh, take pelvic measurements and

classify yearling females. After finishing with the females, the group heads to the headquarters ranch near Laredo to work the yearling bulls.

During this time, Carr also performs a visual appraisal of the cattle and utilizes a unique system he's developed for evaluating the animals.

"We use a form with about a dozen columns on it. When we wean the calves, the heifers and bulls are separated and I evaluate each animal using these guidelines. At the top of the form, I've got different parts of the animal such as rump, shoulders, top, legs and other components."

Each part of the animal is scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the best, 3 average and 5 undesirable. Carr has an additional set of criteria for animals that have a specific problem or characteristic for a particular part, which he denotes with a second number following the basic score that describes the respective component. For example, an animal might be marked as a 2.3 instead of simply a 2.

All of the figures are put into a computer and become part of the animal's record and are used for future breeding decisions or culling purposes.

Given the size of the ranching operation, collecting birth weights on every calf is not a feasible option, so the pelvic measurements taken at yearling age are essential to helping Carr determine if a heifer will be able to have a calf with a normal birthweight.

"Research shows that to not have calving difficulty due to pelvic size, a heifer needs about 3 square centimeters of pelvic area per pound of calf to have good passage of the calf," he said.

"The Beefmaster females with reasonable genetics and adequate nutrition ought to grow in pelvic size 8 to 10 square centimeters per month. If I know what the pelvic measurement is in March, and I want to A.I. these yearling heifers

in May, I can determine whether they will have an adequate pelvic to birth a calf the next March."

Calves are born in the spring and weaned in late October and early November. The keeping heifers are weaned at the ranch headquarters and processed, receiving all their shots and any necessary touch-up dehorning. Once they get over their weaning stress, they are put out on irrigated oats at the Wilson County ranch in Floresville.

The heifers remain on these pastures until the following spring, when they are weighed and palpated to evaluate their tracts. Carr tries to synchronize all of the females on the ranch. The dates vary depending on which of the three ranches they are kept – at the headquarters ranch, the earliest breeding group is late March/early April; at the Wilson County ranch, it's late May; and at the Hill Country ranch in Sisterdale, it's mid-June – and then they are broken into different breeding groups per Carr's direction.

In addition to the Beefmaster calves, Carr also produces 200 or 300 commercial calves each year. He maintains 300 to 500 recipient cows at the headquarters ranch and synchronizes those females in April, May and June. These F1 Braford animals are exposed to Hereford or Angus bulls, which if they don't conceive from a Beefmaster embryo, produce 1/4 Brahman-3/4 English calves. These steer calves are placed on oats at the Wilson County ranch and grown out to 700 lbs. or more. They are then sold to buyers to go directly to a feedlot, Carr said. Heifer calves are grown out until they are between 650-700 lbs. and marketed to buyers typically interested in keeping them for breeding purposes.

Generating Added Value

Carr has been progressive in his use of DNA testing as another selection tool for breeding and marketing his cattle. He

has utilized both Igenity® and Pfizer's Genestar® services. These DNA tests afford a vast amount of information, but Carr feels strongly that the Beefmaster breed could really benefit from gathering feed efficiency data.

"I think our breed is not taking full advantage of the feed efficiency in our cattle. When we wean calves in the fall, the purebred Beefmaster bull calves that I cull from the program are grouped and castrated, kept here until they get over their weaning stress, then sent to a feedlot. I'll feed them – in recent years it's been at Graham Land and Cattle Co. in Gonzales – and enroll them in the Nolan Ryan program.

"We do this for two reasons. One, that weaned Beefmaster bull calf will probably not top the market due to some discrimination. But I satisfied myself long ago that Beefmaster calves do convert feed efficiently and grow rapidly. I find that most years I will make more money by feeding them than I would marketing them as weaned, intact bulls. The other reason is that I gain valuable and detailed carcass information on those animals.

"Our breed will make money. If they'll convert feed and grow rapidly and stay healthy, then they'll make money."

Supporting Beefmasters

Carr has been actively involved with BBU and several satellites since joining the association in the mid-1970s.

"As my numbers began to grow, I became more invested in the Beefmaster breed as far as volunteering for and serving in different capacities with BBU and satellites," he said.

Carr has served on nearly every BBU committee over the years, served on the BBU Board of Directors twice and held the offices of president, vice president, secretary and ex-officio. He was also the BBU representative on the National Cattlemen's Association's Board

of Directors for a number of years as it was transitioning into what is now known as the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and has been an active supporter of the Junior Beefmaster Breeders Association.

The Carrs have consigned cattle to numerous Beefmaster sales over the years. In fact, the Live Oak BBA holds the special distinction as the first satellite that the Carrs sold any cattle through.

"The first heifer we ever consigned to a Beefmaster sale was at one of Live Oak's sales. She was probably the last animal that sold in the sale and was bought by Don Moore," laughs Dusty Carr. "We had great expectations and it was definitely part of our educational process."

That first heifer was a catalyst for future consignments to Live Oak sales. The Carrs have sold several high selling animals over the years. In 2005, they consigned the high grading and record high selling bull, a Cornerstone son out of a Classic Cotton daughter, which sold for \$17,000. They followed this up in 2007 by again consigning the high selling bull, which also brought \$17,000.

The Carrs appreciate the work the Live Oak BBA has done to promote the Beefmaster breed and plan to continue consigning cattle to future sales and supporting the satellite through fundraising events and other activities.

"I think Live Oak, more so than most if not all of the groups, has tried to stay with the basics," Carr said. "They haven't gotten caught up in fads and other things. Their bull sale has been unquestionably successful in drawing consignments and buyers from all over the country. They've done a good job marketing our breed." ★