



Docile, easy to work with Watusi cattle are in demand as rodeo roping stock.

### FAST-GROWING HORNS MEASURE 12 FT. OR MORE, TIP TO TIP

## Watusi Cattle "Horning" Their Way to Popularity

"In the last 15 months the value of these cattle has doubled," says Darol Dickinson, Colorado rancher and breeder of Watusi cattle. "There is real enthusiasm for these big horned cattle," Dickinson, of Calhan, told FARM SHOW.

Best known for their tremendous horns, Watusi bulls sport horns up to a whopping 12 ft. long from tip to tip, and measuring up to 30 in. in circumference at the base. Their horns also grow faster than other breeds, including Texas Longhorns which Dickinson also raises. "This fast horn growth makes the Watusi especially popular for crossbreeding to produce rodeo roping stock. Watusi crosses have enough horn at an early age to be used much sooner for roping than any other breed," explains Dickinson.

The Watusi originated in the central African highland countries of Rwanda and Burundi where temperatures range from 120°F during the day to 20°F at night. "They have no trouble adapting to North American climates," according to Dickinson. The first Watusi were imported to the U.S. in the late 1930's. There are currently about 100 animals in the country today, mostly in zoos and game farms.

Dickinson bought his first Watusi in 1979 and has begun to sell semen from his four-year old Watusi bull "Jimmy the Swede" for \$15 an ampule. Jimmy was imported from Sweden as a calf.

Watusi cattle are known for their ability to survive on poor grazing lands and with little available water. They're also very disease resistant, according to Dickinson. Along with easy calving ability, the Watusi produce very rich milk with up to 7 or 8% butterfat, as opposed to right at 4% for most dairy breeds.

"They have a very strong herd instinct—they like to keep together," notes Charlene Rogers, sales manager for Dickinson Ranch. "When one eats, they all eat. If one licks salt, they all lick salt—they do things together."

Rogers says the Watusi are very docile animals and are easy to work with. She notes that they can get their huge horns through chutes and other tight places with as much ease as Texas Longhorns.

Watusi are usually red, or red and white spotted, when mature. Many of them live to be 20 years old.

Since there are so few Watusi available, the price of individual animals is high—up to \$20,000 apiece. Dickinson is trying to increase their numbers by selling semen for crossbreeding and by offering embryo transfers on top-notch cows. He currently has two Watusi bulls and five cows on his ranch.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charlene Rogers, Dickinson Ranch, RR 2, Calhan, Colo. 80808 (ph 303 683-2655).

### "REPLANT IT THE WAY YOUR GREAT GRANDPARENTS FOUND IT"

## Virgin Prairie For Your Farm Or Yard

All the virgin prairie left in the mid-western plains states wouldn't fill up a county but that may change with the help of Trelen Wilson, Des Moines, Iowa. His company, the Prairie Seed Source, will help you establish a piece of restored, self-sustaining natural prairie on your farm or ranch containing as many as 80 different plants and designed to last forever.

"Most of our customers are individuals who plant a small plot of prairie around their house or farm. We'll send out seeds and instructions, or come out and establish the piece ourselves," Wilson told FARM SHOW.

The prairie, with its mixture of grasses and wildflowers, tends to take care of itself once planted. Most of the plants are perennials and will block out annual weeds.

"The prairie develops and changes from season to season, giving you the privilege of witnessing what few people from today's world have seen. The native plants and grasses are deep-rooted and drought-adapted so there are no brownouts in August. Prairie needs no fertilizing and builds up soil fertility naturally. In the same way that it created some of the richest farmland in the world, it will restore fertility wherever it's planted now," says Wilson.

Prairie should be planted in areas that receive at least 75% sunlight each day and preferably with firebreaks on two sides so that it can be burned off every two or three years. Most any soil can be used although care should be taken to elimi-

nate existing weeds, either by tilling it for one whole growing season prior to planting or steam sterilizing the area before planting. This is because prairie plants, being perennials, need one year to establish roots.

Prairie seed is planted at a rate of 20 to 24 lbs. per acre. Wilson offers 80 varieties to customers out of the known 200 to 300 prairie varieties. He notes, however, that prairie plants are specific to certain areas and that he often must work with customers to find local suppliers of seed.

Wilson says the prairie is not only an attractive way to decorate a farm or build a maintenance-free yard, but is a way to preserve centuries-old species that may be needed in the future.

"Some plants may have genes that could be important in crop breeding in the future or that could be used as crops. Others, such as Pale Indian-Plantain and Compass Plant, have a resin that could be used to produce petroleum. Besides that, true prairie gives us a yardstick by which to measure the fertility of our current farmed soils," he explains.

An established 3 to 4-year-old prairie will not spread, according to Wilson, and does not contain noxious weeds. Enough prairie seed to plant 100 sq. ft., hand gathered from prairie "nurseries", sells for \$10. Wilson charges about \$4,000 to "custom" establish an acre of prairie.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Prairie Seed Source, P.O. Box 1131, Des Moines, Iowa 50311 (ph 515 244-2426).



Trelen Wilson inspects wildflowers and prairie grasses in a field of virgin Iowa prairie.