



# CAL POLY'S WESTERN BONANZA JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW HOSTS FIRST ANNUAL LIVESTOCK AUCTION

## THE BEST IN THE WEST LIVESTOCK AUCTION

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### INTRODUCTION

The purposes of livestock projects are to expose youth to the livestock industry and develop important life skills (Hodgin, 2012). Cal Poly's Western Bonanza Junior Livestock Show began as a senior project in 1985 has grown into the largest student-run jackpot show on the West Coast with four species, showing live, in a student-run facility.

Each year, students from all over the United States and hundreds of exhibitors travel to the acclaimed Paso Robles Event Center in hopes of competing in the first drive-in, and ultimately, be crowned a Western Bonanza Champion. Western Bonanza has become one of the most prestigious livestock shows in the nation and families from all over the state of California and bordering states spend every year. By participating in the show, students gain valuable skills in learning how to properly run and operate a livestock sale (Jack, N.E., and Everlove, D.E. n.d.). Most important of all, exhibiting livestock, and being involved in the show, allows exhibitors to increase leadership capability and soft skills for all youth involved (Jack, N.E., and Everlove, D.E. n.d.).

The show continues to be successful but needs additional funding to improve and remain financially stable. The money raised by the livestock auction will help fund all aspects of the jackpot show and continue to make it the largest junior livestock show on the West Coast. The livestock being auctioned off are provided by breeders from all over the United States with hopes of bringing in large amounts of money to increase the overall profit of the auction (H. Switzer, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

In return, the students will gain valuable skills in learning how to properly run and operate a livestock sale (Jack, N.E., and Everlove, D.E. n.d.). Most important of all, exhibiting livestock, and being involved in the show, allows exhibitors to increase leadership capability and soft skills for all youth involved (Jack, N.E., and Everlove, D.E. n.d.).

### BACKGROUND

What began as a senior project in 1985, primarily as a cattle show, evolved into a five-ring show with four species, showing live, in a student-run facility. The show is now a major event in the region. Cal Poly's Western Bonanza is one of the most competitive jackpot shows in the western United States (H. Switzer, personal communication, December 12, 2017). Western Bonanza is known throughout the jackpot show circuit as providing the best staff, awards and location. The money raised by the livestock auction will help fund all aspects of the jackpot show and continue to make it the largest junior livestock show on the West Coast. The livestock being auctioned off are provided by breeders from all over the United States with hopes of bringing in large amounts of money to increase the overall profit of the auction (H. Switzer, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

### METHODOLOGY

The author's main goals were to assess the economic viability of Western Bonanza's The Best in the West Livestock Auction and to provide a basic sale catalog in a Microsoft Excel format, that included consignor names along with animal weight, sex, identification numbers and pedigrees for all 35 animals consigned. After months of preparation, phone calls and negotiation, Western Bonanza's The Best in the West Livestock Auction was able to take place on Friday, February 16, 2018 at 7 p.m. Before this inaugural Western Bonanza event could take place, consignors had to be invited, contracts had to be returned, and auction staff had to be hired.

Official weigh-ins started mid-day on Friday, February 16th and ended at 3 p.m. After obtaining weights, the authors created a basic sale catalog in a Microsoft Excel format, that included consignor names along with animal weight, sex, identification numbers and pedigrees for all 35 animals consigned. The sale began at 4 p.m. Friday night. During this time, buyers were able to ask each of the 14 consignors questions about their livestock (sex, breed, age, health, etc.). Sharp and goats were displayed on racks to truly show the livestock's build and muscular definition. Hogs were walked within a small showring pen, which allowed buyers to see mobility, squareness and overall quality of the livestock. At 7 p.m. the preview ended and the auction itself began.

The National Anthem was sung by Nismo High School freshman, Lily Brumitt. Todd Ventura, auctioneer and owner of Poor Richard's Press Printing Company, was The Best in the West's official auctioneer. Poor Richard's Press sponsored the event, providing signage and hats. Hats were given to each of the 14 consignors who took a chance and entered their animals into the auction. Tatum Holdener announced the lots and the ring men were Dr. J. Scott Vernon, Ethan Ventura and Jim Settle. Livestock were shown on top of an auction block, which faced a large crowd, consisting of over 100 people.

After all livestock entered the block, numbers were called, and percentages were calculated. The Best in the West Livestock Auction brought in over \$30,000 with over a \$11,000 average on 32 animals sold. One hog was scratched, meaning there was no buyer from the sale and one hog and one lamb were bought back by their consignors. Therefore, only 32 of the 35 animals were economically evaluated. Western Bonanza received 6% of these proceeds, which totaled over \$2,000. The authors decided to charge the 6% commission rate based off of other online sale platforms such as showplace.com and breedersworld.com.

As an incentive, buyers of these animals were able to show in a luxury show, free of charge, on Saturday and Sunday. This luxury show gave the livestock evaluators the opportunity to determine who bought the most show-ready animal. First place received \$100, second received \$50 and third received \$25. Buyers were also able to enter into Show A for free and Show B for \$50 if they wished to compete in the top Western Bonanza experience. With the economic data collected, the authors analyzed the viability of a second Best in the West Livestock Auction.



### RESULTS

The authors found that the economic viability of Future Best in the West Livestock Auctions was superb. The average price per head of \$1,000 was not only higher than expected, but a tremendous feat to attain. Youth buyers will be taking the livestock purchased to various county fairs along with other places, where they will have the chance to sell the livestock. The authors hope that the auction will continue to help benefit the Livestock Auction will have a successful future. Some of these suggestions include earlier advertisement of auction animals and a larger number of head to pick from. Ultimately, The Best in the West Livestock Auction was a success, and the authors were proud to have participated in this inaugural sale and look forward to hearing about its future successes.

### CONCLUSION

After thorough evaluation of the Livestock Auction, the authors were provided feedback from breeders, spectators and volunteers from the event. Spectators said they would have liked to see more photos of the livestock before the actual sale. Additional marketing would have been beneficial to provide the event, such as a sale program and a printed sale program.

To do this, Western Bonanza personnel could be sure to obtain consignor information along with pictures, which would be included in a printed sale program. The auction worked in conjunction with the VIP Sponsor Tent that provided food and beverages for all individuals who attended, buyers and consignors. The authors hope that the auction will continue to help benefit the event held on Friday evening of Western Bonanza weekend and continue to grow larger to help benefit the program and the Livestock Auction.

The authors recommend that Future Best in the West Livestock Auction change consignors an entry fee of \$75 per head to ensure that they will attend the auction with the number of animals that they said they would bring. The authors recommend that the entry fee be used as a holding place for the consignors. Ultimately, the authors recommend that the entry fee be used as a holding place for the consignors. The authors recommend that the entry fee be used as a holding place for the consignors. The authors recommend that the entry fee be used as a holding place for the consignors.

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