

AG NOTES
By John Teague
UT/TSU Extension
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FARMERS MARKET

We are still going strong. 'Tis the season for tomatoes and okra. There is also a good supply of peppers, squash, melons and other various vegetables. The fall cool season vegetables are coming in and it looks good.

We had several vendors during the horse show, and they all said they were still coming. I was asked how long the market lasts, and we usually go on up into October. Remember that all of our vendors are local farmers and all that they produce is what is in season.

We are still open on Thursday afternoons at 2:30. We are at the Farmers Market Pavilion next to the big blue water tower at the Celebration Grounds. See you there.

I WAS THERE!

A couple of weeks ago I wrote that I would be at the 2020 Celebration. This is the big economic and entertainment event booster to our immediate area, and it's more important than many appreciate. I told you then what I thought, and I meant it.

Over the years the horse industry has been controversial, to say the least. Animal welfare and competitive integrity are equally important. There have been great efforts to improve both for some time, but the industry is better. There's still room for improvement.

Now, here's what I saw and what I think. I saw an industry that showed signs of much improvement and a lot of goodness and a promise of a great future. The trainers and owners brought a big number of horses to participate with. Not the biggest, but bigger than recent times. Horses entered were up by about 200 to nearly 2,000 animals.

I saw one of the strongest and most comprehensive, in-depth inspection processes undertaken. There was more surveillance here than for any other breed of livestock ever exhibited anywhere at any time, and I've seen some of those. These horses were observed constantly for soundness of movement and any lameness or enhancement whatsoever. Nothing was left unchecked or without scrutiny.

I know every horse was handled by trained veterinarians and/or their trained qualified proxies to determine any sign of lameness, pain or tissue damage. All of the equipment used by the horse and rider was checked to make sure everything was in compliance. That includes the shoes. Heel and toe ratios were checked. I know that there were horses routinely tested with equipment to detect soreness within the hoof. And when a horse cast a shoe in the ring, the horse and the shoe was examined by the trainer, the exhibitor, the farrier, the show officials, and the inspectors to determine soundness and the ability to proceed. I saw that, and it's good.

Everybody has to have credibility in this, everybody. Trainers, owners, show officials, and inspectors, all of them. We need more science-based work, but we do have university-led research that supports the industry and inspectors.

But still, the inspections were comprehensive and thorough. They were done by groups of trained professionals. None of them compromised the well-being of the horse. That was the true goal. Any reasonable thinker must accept that fact!

The numbers of compliant horses that passed all of these inspections were huge. There were mostly big classes, many with fifteen to twenty horses in them and some over that! There had to be split classes and workouts to sort some of them! Great!

I think the horses were better, and just knowing that they performed as well as they did with a clean bill of health from the comprehensive examinations was gratifying! The various champions were great. I think I saw a couple that I feel were the best ones of all time in their division. I'll let you decide who I'm talking about!

Integrity, consistency of judging, sportsmanship, compliance, quality genetics, reputable training. I don't know of anything that boasts 100% perfection in all areas. Other livestock events, horse racing, car racing, tractor pulls, human participant sports, bicycle racing, football, baseball, basketball, soccer, you name it. Each one of these can point to a few bad apples. But a few bad ones can't stop the abundance of good ones.

The walking horse industry comes really close to that high mark! Adjustments here, some there. Sort out the bad apples and keep the good ones. Work on it.

The 2020 Celebration barrel had a lot of good apples, and we enjoyed them!