

Invitational Ranch Rodeo

2024 Recap

A long-standing tradition rooted in ranching and family legacy, the Invitational Ranch Rodeo kicked off the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) on January 6th. Eight elite teams from Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming vied for the championship title and prize money totaling over \$26,000. The competition consisted of events that replicate tasks often performed in day-to-day ranch work: Cut & Brand, Team Sorting, Double Mugging, and Wild Cow Milking.

The competition was intense, with the reigning NWSS champion team and the reigning world champion teams both in the draw. Jolly Ranch of Agate, CO rose to the lead with their unmatched speed and precision. Team members Jesse Jolly, Luke Kelley, Austin Crist, and Luke Meier earned the most points over four events.



Jolly Ranch won the Cut & Brand with a time of 58.91 seconds while Bootheel 7 Livestock from Lusk, WY dominated the Sorting event with a time of 57.63 seconds. In the Double Mugging, Veale Ranch of Aledo, TX claimed the winning spot with a time of 103.37 seconds. In the last event, Broken Spear Ranch of Model, CO came out on top in the Wild Cow Milking with an impressive time of 44.97 seconds.

Luke Meier of the Jolly Ranch earned the Top Hand award and the Top Horse award went to Add Two n Two, “La Junta” ridden by Sage Haythorn, recognizing a supreme working ranch gelding.

The Excellence in Animal Care award recognizes teams for their proper and respectful animal husbandry practices which are strong values of the National Western Stock Show. This year’s award was presented to Haythorn Land & Cattle of Arthur, NE in recognition of their emphasis on ethical handling of animals in a competitive atmosphere.

The Invitational Ranch Rodeo exemplified the dedication and skill inherent in the western way of life. The event drew a large crowd who admired the hard work of cowboys and cowgirls. The event not only entertained but serves as a testament to the authenticity of ranch practices through each of the four events. Its success demonstrates the connection between competitors and the public, while steadfastly preserving the legacy of working ranch traditions.

To learn more about NWSS Horse events, visit <https://nationalwestern.com/horse-shows/>

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Photos by Performance Horse Photography