

The Bulls Used in Bloodless Bullfighting

By Jim White



History and Breeding

A subspecies of the pre-historic auroch depicted in many Paleolithic European cave paintings, the Toro Bravo or fighting bull, *Bos taurus ibericus*, is an Iberian cattle breed whose origins can be traced to wild bulls from the Iberian Peninsula. Its use as game cattle was made by the Roman Empire for the Colosseum games around 1,900 years ago. The breed retained the aggressiveness of its ancestor through selective breeding. It is bred free-range, rarely seeing a man on foot, in extensive estates in Southern Spain, Portugal, Latin American countries and now California and South Texas. The breed is selected primarily for strength, vigor, intelligence and its aggressive behaviour under little or no provocation at all. Fighting cattle are recognized for their elegant stature. The Toro has a long curved neck and holds its head very high. The breed is noted for its superb agility, and the long slender legs allow it to generate remarkable speed (faster than a quarter horse at 100 yards). Fully mature bulls weigh about 500 to 700 kg (1100 to 1600 lbs).

The Bulls of Texas

The *La Querencia Ranch* owned by Fred Renk in La Gloria, Texas boasts pure bred fighting cattle of the *San Mateo and Garfias* bloodlines. From birth, the animals are raised in their natural environment with very little human interaction, unlike beef or dairy cattle. A typical herd consisting of 20-30 cows to 1 bull is afforded approximately 60 acres of free range, although some herds are given up to 400 acres. Large rolls of protein rich cane or coastal hay are placed in the pastures to supplement the animals diet. Large stands of Mesquite trees on the ranch provide cover and shade, while pump fed tanks offer ample supplies of fresh water.

Calves are separated from their mothers as yearlings. They are then tagged, vaccinated against common Bovine diseases and moved to a separate pasture. After another year of growing, the bulls are moved to their own pasture and await the start of a life as a fighting bull, a life that will last up to 15 years. Since fighting bulls do not have to be "trained" to charge, they have minimal contact with humans during their lives. They are instead left to live a very natural life in the fields they were born to roam.