



BUILDING A HERD FULL OF ACCOLADE

WITH BULL CREEK LONGHORNS

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In the quiet community of Fayetteville, Texas, nestled on the aptly named Bull Creek Road, a legacy of intentional breeding and unwavering dedication has been unfolding for over twenty years. Bill and Suzanne Torkildsen of Bull Creek Longhorns have built a program that's not only garnered industry recognition, but also serves as a blueprint for thoughtful, sustainable Texas Longhorn breeding. Their story is one of evolution, education, and grit—woven with humor, hard-earned wisdom, and deep respect for the cattle they raise.

Humble Beginnings with Big Dreams

In 2004, the Torkildsen's didn't set out to become award-winning breeders. They simply needed an agricultural exemption.

"We had goats on the property and didn't like them much," Suzanne laughed. "So we thought Longhorns would be cool. Iconic. Historic. We went to Kay Roush at A Splash of Color Longhorns and bought three cows and a young bull."

"Don't buy your first cows at a sale. Go private treaty. Sit with the breeder. Learn from them. You'll avoid a lot of heartbreak."

Their initial lack of experience meant lessons came the hard way. Suzanne had some familiarity with cattle from her childhood, helping her father with Black Angus and Charolais. Bill, however, had none. Still, their curiosity propelled them forward.

They began attending futurities and sales. It was at one such event that they first

encountered the famed Don Julio cattle and, later, made their way to El Coyote Ranch.

“We called Felix Serna and made an appointment. We were just mesmerized by the Don Julio daughters. We bought three. And that’s where we learned about Tari Graves.”

Today, the Torkildsen herd still carries a strong Tari Graves influence.

School of Hard Knocks

Early experiences included buying cows that looked good on paper, only to find out they lacked key production traits.

“One of our first was a Phenomenon daughter. We thought we got a great deal. She didn’t milk. She couldn’t raise a calf. It was heartbreaking.”

It was experiences like that which made Suzanne a strong advocate for buying from breeders who will be honest about both strengths and flaws.

“When people ask me, ‘Why don’t you like that cow?’ I tell them. Whether it’s the udder, the back, the feet—I’m honest. And most breeders will be if you just visit them and talk.”

One of their first wins was with a bull they had bought from Kay Roush and gifted to their son. He took second place in a futurity, and the whole family was ecstatic.

“We were going to paint his picture on the trailer,” Suzanne joked. “We were that proud.”

Developing Their Own Blend

As their knowledge grew, so did their herd—and their standards. Today, the Torkildsen program is defined by selectivity, long-term vision, and a keen eye for conformation.

“When they’re young, it’s all about conformation. That rectangular body, strong back, tail set, good feet. Color is a plus, but structure comes first.”



“START WITH THE BEST COW YOU CAN AFFORD —NOT THE MOST COWS.” – SUZANNE TORKILDSEN

They emphasize muscle, hooks-to-pins alignment, and especially feet—something Suzanne says can be a red flag as early as 8 or 9 months. “If the feet aren’t there, they’re not going to be. That’s genetic.”

When it comes to bulls, they make the call early, “By 12 months, we know. If he’s not going to be a herd sire, he’s not staying.”

Their breeding foundation still revolves around Tari Graves descendants, with strategic crosses to Cowboy Tuff Chex, Rebel HR, 20 Gauge, and now Horseshoe J Important through HL Higher Ground. They’ve created what they call their own “blend,” a custom combination of genetics that emphasizes longevity, productivity, and elegance.

“It’s like moonshine,” Bill joked. “Everyone’s got their own recipe. We’ve got ours.”



Staying the Course

When asked about resisting breeding trends, Suzanne is quick to reply, “We’re good at sticking to our guns.”

Their different perspectives are an asset. While Bill excels at breeding plans, Suzanne brings strong, immediate opinions—a balance that has paid off.

Each day starts and ends with pasture rides, evaluating calves, discussing future matings, and enjoying the land. “Every day we talk about what worked, what didn’t, and what we’re trying next. That’s our favorite part.”

Innovation on the Ranch

Despite their traditional values, the Torkildsen’s embrace technology.

Ultrasound: Both trained in the medical field, they use portable ultrasound for early pregnancy detection. “You can see a 45-day fetus with a heartbeat. No guessing.”

Immobilizer: For safe and quick working of cattle. “Our vet loves it. No ripped ears, no wrestling. It’s safer for everyone.”

Free-choice Minerals: “We saw a 20% improvement in conception rates after offering dry minerals and mineral tubs.”

Custom Pens & Alleyways: “Alleyways are key. You can work cattle safely without trailers in every pasture.”

Sales & Marketing

They consign to four or five sales per year but also lean heavily on private treaty and Hired Hand Live. “Put your best in the ring. That’s your advertisement. If it’s not your best, take it to the sale barn.”

Suzanne frequently submits animals to Hired Hand’s monthly customer sales, crediting success to pricing, quality, and clear descriptions. “Sometimes they don’t sell, but people call after. They want to know more. If your cattle speak for themselves, they’ll move.”

Legacy, Love & Longhorns

With 140 head on the ranch, six grandchildren, and 40 years of marriage behind them, the Torkildsen’s have a treasure trove of stories—including working cattle arguments on their concrete “patio” by the chute.

“We had a rough morning once. Bill turned to me and said, ‘If we ever renew our vows, we’re doing it on the patio.’ That about sums it up.”

From bulls they’ve sold to future sires they’re excited to watch grow, every animal represents decades of passion, learning, and the art of ranching done right.

“You’re supposed to outproduce yourself,” Suzanne said. “We tell our cows the same thing we tell our kids: Be better than us.”

This article has been written based on the transcript of the interview during our From the Pasture Podcast. Listen to the full podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you stream your podcasts.