

# Dr. Bill Anderson, veterinarian

BY ANNE CHRISTENSEN

*Dr. Bill Anderson has been the official veterinarian of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in Fort Worth, Texas, for 30 years – ever since he earned his DVM at the University of Missouri in 1980. In December 2010, he was named the PRC A’s first Purina Veterinarian of the Year.*

**Q. Is it true that you actually live on the grounds of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in Fort Worth, Texas, during the three-week event?**

**A.** Sure. I have a trailer that I move onto the grounds near the show cattle barn. If the show cattle are off the grounds, I might go home and change my clothes. But I’m there 24 hours a day, almost every day. I want to be on the grounds if a calf has a respiratory problem or if a timed-event cowboy’s horse slips and skins a leg when they arrive at 1 or 2 a.m.

**Q. How about the bucking stock? Do they need a lot of care?**

**A.** To be perfectly honest, the way roughstock are conditioned and the way they are transported with lots of room on the trucks – and they’re so used to travel and the rodeo life that they aren’t stressed at all – we have very little problem with the bucking stock. Sometimes, one might have a belly ache we need to treat, or one might bump her head on a chute and need sutures. But health problems with roughstock are few and far between.

**Q. Then what are your major tasks at the show and rodeo?**

**A.** I’m responsible for the health of about 23,000 animals – not just the show cattle and rodeo stock, but goats, rabbits, chickens, mules, llamas, sheepdogs ... They are all well-cared-for by their owners, from a 4-H chicken to the best bucking bulls, but any of them can come down with an illness, so I walk all the barns first thing in the morning. I might see pigs in one pen with a skin ailment, or ringworm on a show heifer, and we isolate them right away. And we are always looking at footing in the arenas and the areas where the animals walk from barns to arenas. Every decision is made with the safety and health of the animals in mind.

**Q. Knowing what kind of hard work your father, Dr. Dan Anderson, put into his large-**



Dr. Bill Anderson occasionally leaves his barn rounds at the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in Fort Worth, Texas, where he cares for up to 23,000 head over three weeks, to participate in the rodeo’s grand entry. Photo courtesy of the Anderson family.

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**animal veterinary practice didn’t make you want to find an easier job?**

**A.** Even though I knew better, it was the only thing I ever wanted to do. I lived it, breathed it, ate it. I started showing calves in 4-H, and my dad would get me up in the middle of the night to make calls with him all year. I’d carry steel

buckets of medicine and water, equipment, ropes, whatever he needed. He was a great car-door roper. He could drive a sedan up to a calving heifer who was in trouble and rope her from just outside the open car door!

**Q. Of everything you learned from your father, what has helped you most in working with rodeo livestock specifically?**

**A.** Learning to have a “feel” for the stock. Most you can move right through a chute and work on, but others can raise a ruckus, even in a restrained area, and make a few seconds – like passing a stomach tube – seem like an hour. Even when you walk up to a bull who’s normally calm, that might be his bad day, and you have to have the ability to get out of the pen! But you can usually move among rodeo stock without spooking them. I have to read animal personalities all day, and these animals are not frightened – they settle right in, and that could only be true if they were treated well. They know they’re at a rodeo, and that they’re here to do their job.