

ANNUAL SALE

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Bucking horses kick other news aside in Miles City

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MILES CITY — Freeman? Who are the Freeman?

"The Freeman thing isn't even talked about around here," said Don Richard, president of the Board of Governors of the Miles City Bucking Horse Sale, Inc. "That's a dead issue for this event. The people who come here are interested in the horses."

The 45th Annual Miles City Jaycee Bucking Horse Sale proceeded full-throttle this year, even with the news of a possible breakthrough in the Freeman's standoff with FBI agents in Jordan less than 90 miles northwest of the Cow Capitol.

J. Wixom, executive director of the Miles City Chamber of Commerce, said the town of approximately 8,600 people has been

host since Thursday to the usual 12,000 to 15,000 visitors from all over the United States and the world. The Bucking Horse Sale ends today.

Only a newspaper reporter from New York City phoned earlier in the week, Wixom said, wondering whether the standoff would affect attendance at the sale.

It didn't seem to, Wixom said. All of the town's hotels were booked solid, leaving some visitors to take up lodging in Glendive, Terry and Forsyth. Everyone apparently really was only interested in the 325 bucking horses consigned for the sale and the roughly 100 cowboys who rode them.

Richard said the horses sold for an average of \$1,500 each, with one of the pricier horses fetching \$5,750 on Friday night.

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Heath Anderson's horse rolled on the rider's leg in the bareback event in Miles City.

Gazette photo by Bob Zella

Horses

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Dale Haley, an Indiana-based bucking horse buyer for rodeos, said he looks for a horse that pleases the crowd. In other words, it bucks and kicks high and it doesn't run a lot.

Steve Gander, a buyer from Iowa, said bucking horses are born with "the heart, the desire and the athletic ability" to buck.

"There are a lot of bucking horses that you can put a halter on and lead around," Gander said. "They just don't want a man on their back."

Gander noted, however, that a bucking horse with a wild streak can be unappealing.

"You don't want them to hurt themselves," he said.

But it's a bucking horse's wild streak that puts a glimmer in the eyes of Roundup cowboy Scott Tomlin. "The wilder the better," he said.

Tomlin said a great deal of mental preparation goes into riding a bucking horse, especially because his success depends largely on the luck of the draw.

Horses and cowboys are paired through a drawing process, Tomlin said.

"I try to picture how the horse is going to buck and how I need to ride him, as far as getting a good spur lick," Tomlin said. He said it's the "thrill of victory" that attracts him to bucking.

It's the land and the people, however, that has attracted Greenwich, Conn., resident Jeff Reardon and a number of his New England friends to the bucking horse sale the last few years.

"Great people, good time, beautiful countryside," Reardon said.

"It's just a lot of fun," said Lyman Delano, also of Connecticut.