Longhorn Vs Watusi

Recognizing Breed Characteristics.

Let me start by saying, this article is not meant in any way to be accusatory to anyone or their breeding program. It is being written with the soul intent to help educate newer Texas Longhorn Breeders about the differences between the breed characteristic of the Texas Longhorn and other horned breeds of cattle, mainly the Watusi. I am not saying we do or do not have Watusi influence in today's Longhorn cattle but I do believe that breeders need to be able to recognize the differences in the breed characteristics of the Texas Longhorn vs. the Watusi. We are going to take a look at these differences and make a point by point comparison.
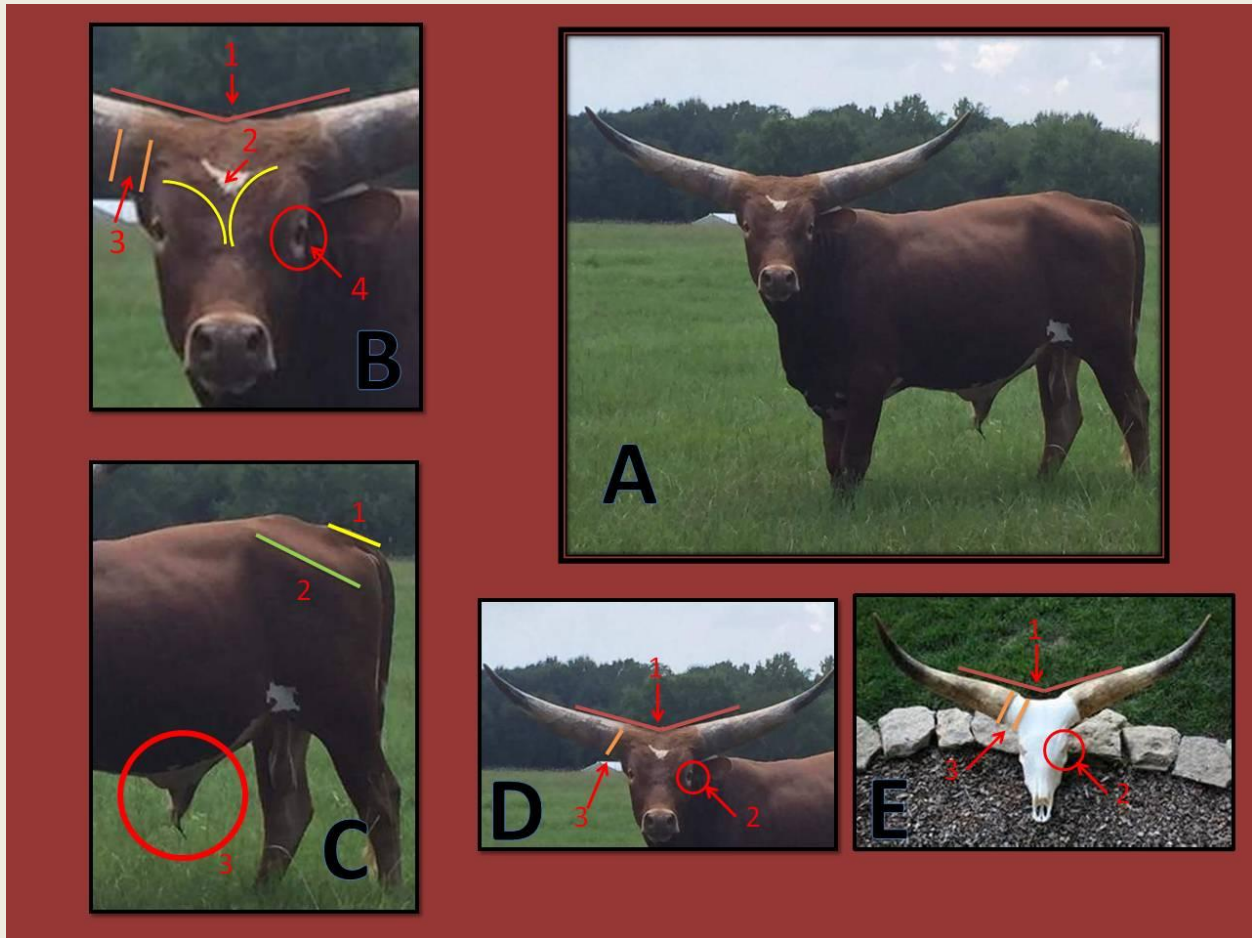

Photo B & D   1) The Poll/ Top of Head with V shape. **2)** The forehead has a slight V in it. **3)** Horn shell and hairline starts a good distance from the side of the head.   **4 on B & 2 on D)** Eye socket set differently than a Longhorn.   **5)** Bone space between the skull side and the start of the outer horn shell is larger than the Longhorn. **Photo C   1)** Tail head   **2)** Slope from hooks to pins.   **3)** Navel

Look at Photo A. Is this bull a Longhorn? Is this bull a Watusi? Is this bull a Longhorn Watusi cross that is sometimes called a LongTusi? When you look at the bull as a whole it may not be easy for you to tell for sure which is the correct answer.

Let's break it down a little more by looking at his head in Photos B and D. Look at Point 1 which is the poll or top of the head. When we look at this point you will notice a V shape to the poll, which is a characteristic of a Watusi. This V shape can be easily seen in Photo E, which is a Watusi skull. A Longhorn's poll is pretty much flat, see Photo F of Longhorn skull below. Note the difference in the polls.

Now let's look back at Photo B to Point 2, the middle of the head, there is a V shape there as well which is another Watusi trait.

Now look at Point 3, the distance of the hairline from the side of the head. You will notice the hairline and the start of the outer horn shell is a good ways away from the side of the head. This is another characteristic of the Watusi. Look at the Watusi skull Photo E, notice the amount of bone showing before the horn shell starts. See Photo F of the Longhorn skull, notice the difference, the horn shell starts close to the side of the skull.

In Photo B look at Point 4, the eyes and the way they are set. The difference is pretty subtle but becomes more apparent when you look at Photo E and Photo F.

At this point it is looking more like the bull in Photo A is not a Longhorn. Looking at Photo C you will notice at Point 2 that there is a great deal of slope from hooks to pins. This slope is more than you will see on most Longhorns. You will also notice at Point 1 that the top of the tail head is flatter than most longhorns. Looking at Point 3 on Photo C you notice the navel and it's pendulous shape. This example is not as extreme as it can be when Watusi influence is present. After looking at the breed characteristics one by one we can see that this bull is not Longhorn and the Watusi characteristics are not strong enough to be a full blood Watusi. In fact he is 50% Longhorn and 50% Watusi. This bull has never been promoted as anything other than what he is, a percent bull which made him a good example to use in our evaluation.

Crossbred bulls, like the one used in our example, are produced as a way of up breeding the Watusi from a percentage to a Full Blood status. Most Watusi breeders use this method as a way to build or grow their herds. Percentage Watusi bulls or Full Blood Watusi were also used to produce Longhorn - Watusi cross roping steers with more base so they could hold up to the stress of roping. This practice was used years ago by some Longhorn breeders to increase their roping steer market, which was a mainstay of many breeders back in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

In the bovine world there are two classifications of cattle. Bos taurus and Bos indicus. They are all cattle but different species. The Watusi and the Brahman are in the Bos indicus classification. When these cattle are crossed with cattle from the Bos taurus classification the traits or characteristics of these cattle can be diluted down but remain in the background of animals in the form of recessive genes. When two animals with a large amount of Bos taurus influence have even a small amount of Bos indicus genetics several generations back are bred to each other the resulting offspring can exhibit or express the recessive genes or characteristics of the Bos indicus cattle. This can happen even though the parents do not exhibit or express the Bos indicus traits. This can even happen when the recessive genes are 4 or more generations back but may not happen each or every time these particular animals are mated to each other. Because of these factors it is very important for Longhorn breeders to understand what to look for when visually inspecting your cattle.
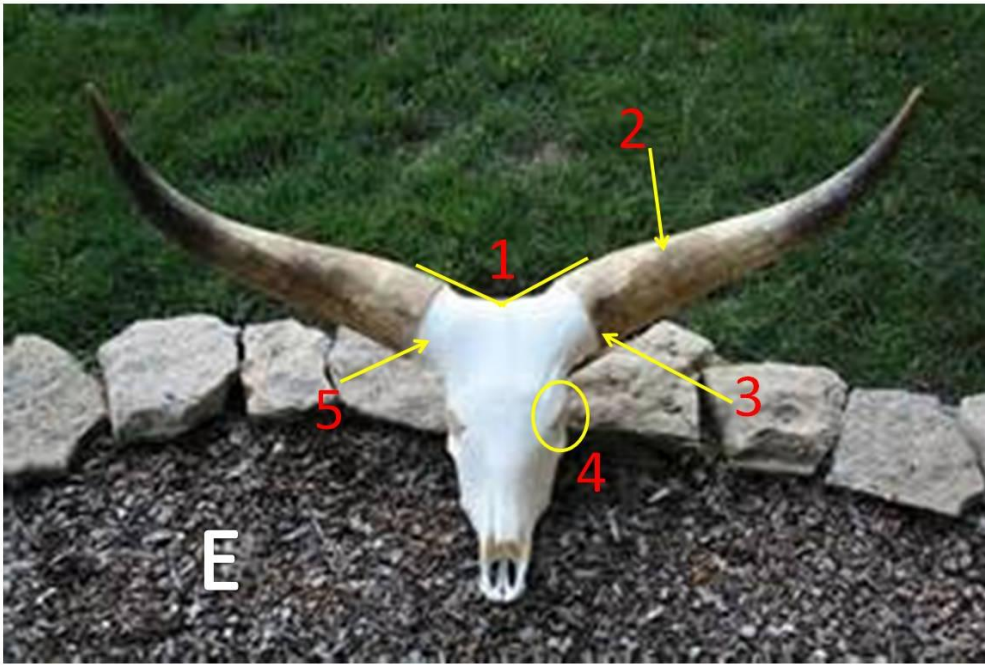
Watusi Skull **1)** The Poll/ Top of Head with V shape. **2)** The horn has the thickness from the base almost better than half way of the horn. **3)** Horn shell starts a good distance from the side of the skull. **4)** Eye socket set differently than a Longhorn. **5)** Bone space between the skull side and the start of the outer horn shell is larger than the Longhorn.
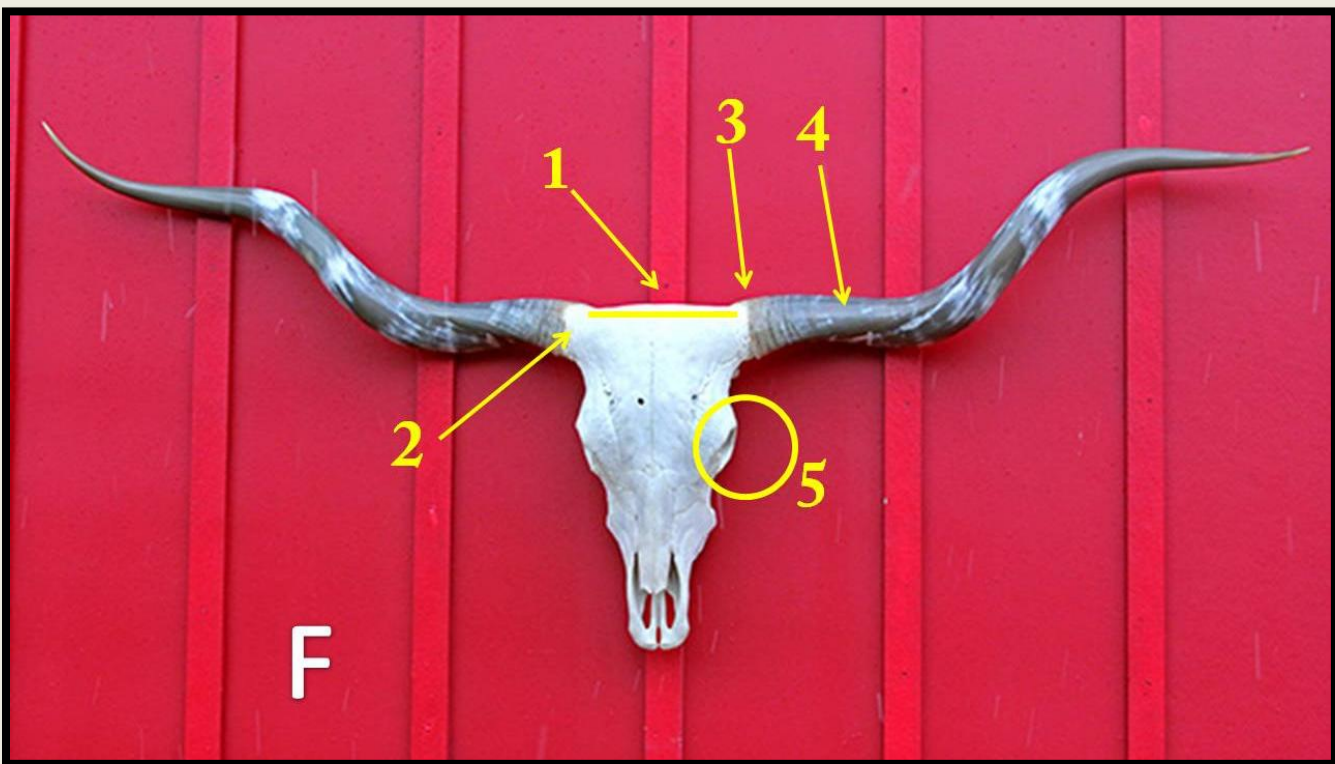
Longhorn Skull **1)** Poll/Top of Head straight and flat for the most part. Unlike the V shape of the Watusi skull. **2)** Outer horn shell starts almost at the side of the skull unlike the Watusi skull. **3)** Very little space before the outer horn shell starts. **4)** The horn starts getting smaller almost immediately as it gets further out from the base unlike the Watusi which doesn't until about half way out on the horn. **5)** Eye socket and placement differs from the Watusi.

By studying the differences in breed characteristics between the Longhorn and the Watusi breeds, it will help breeders to notice the slight but important differences found in the cattle that have the influence of non-Longhorn genetics. Each one of these characteristics on its own doesn't always indicate the presents of non Longhorn genetics. However when you look at them one by one and then again as a whole it can really assist breeders in spotting cattle that exhibit non Longhorn characteristics. By being able to recognize these non Longhorn traits or characteristics, breeders can make better genetic decisions for their herd and for future generations of the legendary Texas Longhorn Breed. As breeders, it is our responsibility to protect the Texas Longhorn Breed. If you do not know what to look for when visually inspecting Longhorn cattle then you are not going to be able to honor your responsibility as a Texas Longhorn Breeder. By being open to learning about this great breed we can be better stewards of the Longhorn legacy that we are supposed to be preserving and protecting. Honor the Breed by knowing the Breed.