

Warren Lale Blizzard (1888–1954): A Brief Biography

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Warren Lale Blizzard, born in modest circumstances on April 8, 1888, in McPherson, Kansas, “worked his way” through Kansas State College and received a B.S. degree in Animal Husbandry in 1910. After experiences as a farmer, assistant in Animal Husbandry at Kansas State College, fieldman for Capper Publications, and extension livestockman at Iowa State College, he joined the Oklahoma State A&M College Animal Husbandry Department in 1915. He served as Department Head from 1919 to 1943 and Dean and Director from 1939 to 1953. His many leadership positions at the national level included Vice President of the American Society of Animal Production and President of its Southern Section, Director of the American Royal and President of the National

Association of Stallion Enrollment Boards and the Southwestern American Livestock Show.

More important than facts and statistics are some insights about Blizzard as a pioneer and the impact the man had on animal agriculture. When he joined the faculty in 1915, Oklahoma had been a state for only eight years and its livestock industry was in its infancy. Two decades later, only eight states exceeded Oklahoma in livestock income.

Warren Blizzard was profoundly involved in this dramatic evolution and his impact was a reflection of strong convictions. He believed that superior animals would be cheaper to produce, bring more in the market place, and be more profitable for the producer. He used the college herds as well as 4-H and FFA livestock shows with extraordinary effectiveness to promote that concept. Additionally, he spent a vast amount of personal time to help improve the quality of literally thousands of herds in Oklahoma and beyond. He had an uncanny ability to select herd sires that would prove to be great genetic improvers. Similarly, Blizzard had the unique ability to identify people, early in their career, who were destined to affect the livestock industry. He then would work closely with them to achieve goals of importance.

Blizzard established a unique, powerful rapport with the animal industry, with service as its cornerstone, effecting a two-way communication that not only served as an educational avenue but also elicited strong industry support. This concept he developed so effectively is timeless in its importance. In recognition of his contributions to animal agriculture, his peers honored him by adding his portrait to the Saddle and Sirloin Collection in 1939.

When he joined the Oklahoma A&M faculty in 1915, the Animal Husbandry Department was small (eight graduates), only a few years old, and had little national recognition. He found nine cows and no bulls when he arrived. Within a dozen years the department’s livestock judging team had retired the coveted “bronze bull” trophy at Chicago’s International Livestock Exposition and the department had attained national prominence via the stature of its faculty, the quality of its graduates, and its superior herds and flocks.

Blizzard was a renowned livestock judge in his day. More importantly, he was a great judge of people and an astute predictor of the future performance of both faculty and students. It was this trait, and a clear

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vision of future needs, that helped make him an unusually effective administrator for 34 years.

The accomplishments of the department's students were a reflection of Blizzard's basic philosophies, such as: "It is important from a teaching standpoint, on-campus and off, to have superior animals." "Students remember best what they see and handle." "In this

competitive world, students should be taught, in addition to livestock knowledge and skills, character, integrity, pride, and the importance of setting and achieving lofty goals."

Many of Blizzard's concepts and approaches of 75 years ago, appropriately updated, would serve us well today.