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NEWS RELEASE

Vintage tractor show brings back vintage memories



The Calgary Stampede received nearly 30 entries for its Vintage Tractor Pull and Vintage Tractor Show & Shine on July 4 and 5, 2009. Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary -- Robyn Jones has 23 vintage John Deere tractors . . . and counting.

"What can I say?" shrugs the Airdrie-area farmer with a wry grin. "It's a disease, really."

If it's a disease, then it's thoroughly infected the Calgary Stampede's Big Top this weekend during the annual Vintage Tractor Pull and Vintage Tractor Show & Shine.

Nearly 30 competitors from Southern Alberta have brought their restored vintage tractors, built in 1960 or earlier, to square off in six different weight classes in this popular invitational event. The winners will be determined by the highest aggregate score over two pulls.

Jones has entered his 1959 John Deere 730 in Class 4, for vintage beasts weighing 7,000 to 8,499 pounds. Jones worked for John Deere from 1957 through '61, but it's only been in his golden years that he and his wife Audrey have got the collecting itch -- and begun entering their immaculately restored specimens in regional tractor pulls and parades.

"I farm with CASE machinery, and I've got John Deere antiques. I can't afford the new John Deeres," he says with a chuckle.

"When I worked, I never had extra money. Now, I get my free money from the government, and it's no good in the bank," adds Jones, whose throwback tractors range from 1945 to '59 vintage. "Whenever I get a few bucks, I buy another tractor."



This year's Vintage Tractor Pull kicked off with round No. 1 on Saturday, July 4 at the Big Top. The event concludes with the second and final round at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 5 in the same venue, where champions will be crowned in Classes 1 through 5, plus featherweight.

"The bigger tractors can pull a lot of weight. Probably the highest horsepower is the Oliver, at about 95 or that range," says Barrie Jung of Melfort, Sask.-based Hodgins Auctioneers, which supplies the weight sled for the Stampede's Vintage Tractor Pull.

"And sometimes horsepower isn't the answer. John Deere, for example, made a very well-balanced tractor, and that can sometimes make a big difference," says Jung. "I don't often allow it, but we've even hooked on steel-wheeled tractors and crawler tractors, with an old cleat track."

The Vintage Tractor Show & Shine took over the Big Top on Saturday night, and that's an aspect of the vintage event that organizers are trying to emphasize a little more each year. One incentive is a gold-and-silver Stampede buckle being offered this year for best in show.

"We're shifting the emphasis a little, to where we're a show, instead of a contest," says Bob Boswell, chair of the Stampede's Farm Equipment committee.

The Vintage Tractor Pull and Vintage Tractor Show & Shine provide an opportunity for young and old to relive our western heritage in a fun, entertaining and competitive package.

"A lot of people who come to the Stampede have some degree of agriculture knowledge, and they are familiar with tractors," says Boswell. "Now, today's tractor is an extreme difference from what we saw as kids. So I think it's just being able to show the younger generation today that this is how we did the work. It wasn't computerized or self-propelled, and you actually had to stay awake to drive them.

"You can hear the old-timers sitting in the stands, saying: 'Hey, I had one like that' or 'I had the model down from it.' "

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The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit www.calgarystampede.com.