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Notorious stretch of highway sees second tragic accident in weeks

By Melinda McCutchen
Publisher

The last fatality accident of 2014 in the 5 mile stretch of US Highway 277 north of Bronte occurred Saturday evening, December 27, 2014, taking the life of a local woman. Only 15 days later on Sunday evening, January 11, 2015, a three vehicle accident occurred in the same stretch. Fortunately, although one man was airlifted to the hospital and two more transported by ambulance, this head-on collision resulted in no fatalities as of press time.

These most recent accidents are just two of several which have occurred in this dangerous stretch of highway in the last couple of years. With 2014 statistics not yet available, information contained within this article is based on interviews with emergency personnel and witnesses to the accidents.

The majority of the tragic accidents had three common factors.

* The accidents were head-on

collisions near one of two curves in this stretch of highway. When heading north on US Highway 277, one curve begins before you reach the city limits and continues for approximately half mile (top right photo). The second curve is located at Old Highway Road, about three miles north of Bronte (bottom right photo).

* The accidents occurred when the southbound driver crossed the center line into oncoming traffic. None of these southbound drivers were locals.

* The accidents occurred after sunset.

Two of the above factors are unchanged from years past when accident statistics were low. The curves have been there since the highway's construction and drivers have always traveled at night. What is contributing to this uptick in accidents?

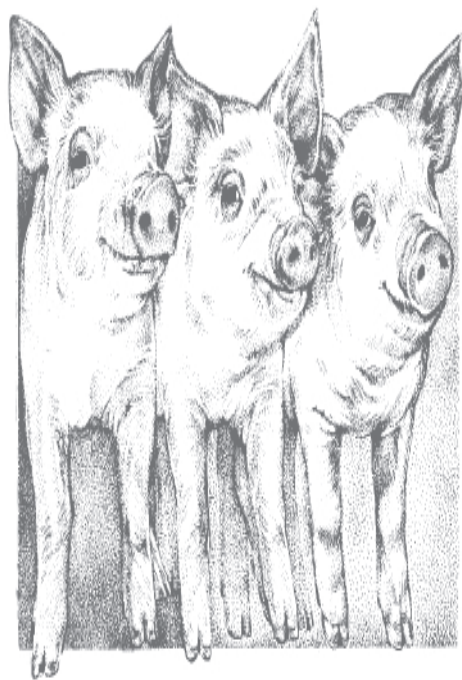
The first thing usually mentioned is the new speed limit of 75 mph. However, before the speed limit was decreased to 55 mph in the 1970s, the speed



limit was 70 mph. Therefore, the increased speed limit may not be the sole cause.

Residents living on US Highway 277 North or on one of the roads intersecting with this highway have been very aware of the changes in traffic in the last five years. According to Texas Department of Transportation's 2013 statistics, the average daily number of vehicles on this stretch of

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**76th Coke County
Jr. Livestock
Show
Friday &
Saturday
January 16 & 17**

County Stock Show set for this weekend

The 76th edition of the Coke County Junior Livestock Show will be held Friday and Saturday, January 16 and 17, 2015, at the Sterling Lindsey Memorial Exhibition Building in Robert

Lee.

This year's show will feature animals in the Market Lamb, Market Goat, Market Swine and Market Steer shows, but more importantly, many young exhibitors from around the county.

New this year is the Pee-Wee Show. It will be held immediately following the Sheep and Goat Shows on Friday evening, January 16 and is open to all children 8 and under who are not 4-H members. Clover bud members are eligible to

participate. Participants will need to find a lamb or goat to borrow for the show and sign up at the concession stand during the Sheep and Goat Shows.

The county stock show offers the youth of Coke County an opportunity to exhibit their livestock projects which they have worked with for more than 11 months, in many cases.

Besides being a worthwhile educational activity for our youth in teaching them responsibility, working with others and numerous life skills, it is an important economic endeavor when you consider the animals purchased from county producers, feed purchased locally and the premium sale monies that come in from county and other areas. The total amounts of monies generated by these exhibitors amounts to over \$150,000 per year that is circulated in the county.

The show will begin Friday, January 16, at 6:30 pm with the Market Lamb show, followed by the Market Goat show. These will be judged by Bronc Fleming, livestock producer of San Angelo. Saturday, January 17, the Market Swine show gets

underway at 8:30 am, followed by the Market Steer show at 11 am, judged by Duffy Galloway, Loraine ISD agriculture teacher. The Buyer's appreciation barbecue will be served at 12 noon. Following the barbecue, the premium sale will be held at 2 pm to honor the prize winning animals and exhibitors.

Persons wishing to donate to the Coke County Livestock Show can contact either the County Extension office in the courthouse or one of the Livestock Association directors which include Shane Kelton, Douglas Roberts, Tom Sawyer, Terry Austin, Michael Cervenka, Riley Coalson, Corby Kelso, Curtis Knight, Steve Oleksiuk III, Terry Queen, T. J. McCullough, Ricky Ross, Ricky Royall, Bill Torres, Bob Sheets, Noel Tinkler, Mark Wright, Emmitt Crisp, Jack Yanez and Orlando DeLaGarza.

The directors of the Coke County Junior Livestock Show would like to invite everyone to come and participate in this year's County Livestock Show and support the youth of our county for their hard work and dedication.