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## MEDIA RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Premier horses first to try out new digs**

ABILENE, Texas -- Hundreds of equine experts and their talented horses will ride into town this week to for two national competitions: The 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Circuit Cutting, Dec. 28 through New Year's Day, and the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Abilene Spectacular Cutting, Jan. 3 through Jan. 8.

The horses already win bragging rights as the first to try out the Taylor County Expo Center's sturdy new Priefert equestrian stalls, recently completed thanks to a bond approved by voters in November 2016.

"Cutters are serious about their sport and their horses," said Rochelle Johnson, Expo Center Executive Vice President and General Manager. "These stalls give the contestants more confidence in our ability to provide safe lodging for these high-dollar animals."

Cutting is big business for Abilene. ACVB data show these two events, organized each year by the team at nearby Gully Ranch, have contributed more than \$18.2 million to the local economy during their long-running history. This year's contests are expected to bring nearly 1000 guests and \$522,000 into the area.

The public is invited to watch these well-bred horses show off their cow sense. Competitions begin at 8 a.m., and admission is free.

**Cutting Horse Facts:**

- Like many rodeo sports, cutting is derived from the daily work of real cowboys.
- In 1898, the first advertised cutting contest was held in Haskell. 15,000 people attended, many arriving on horseback.
- Each contestant gets 2:30 minutes to cut at least two cows from a herd.
- Horses receive extra credit for their skill, style and exertion.
- Cutting demands extraordinary control on one hand, and lightning-quick action on the other.
- 96% of all horses competing are Quarter Horses, who are bred for this sport, although Paints, Appaloosas, Thoroughbreds and Arabians can also be competitive.
- Judges score contestants on a scale of 60 to 80 points.

-- Source National Cutting Horse Association

<http://www.abilenevisitors.com/Abilene-Winter-Spectacular-Cutting-Annual-2018>

Located in the T& P Depot landmark downtown, the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau leverages local hotel tax into economic development. The ACVB's tourism professionals harness the latest travel trends, research and strategies to bring groups and leisure visitors to Abilene. Travelers to the Abilene MSA produced more than \$11.5 million in local receipts in 2016, bringing happy people to stay in local hotels, shop, dine, and enjoy sports, arts and attractions. Established as an affiliate of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce in 1970, the bureau has improved the quality of life and enhanced the Abilene visitor experience for nearly 50 years.

To learn about Abilene's best adventures, see the ACVB's fully loaded calendar of events, helpful information, and discounts for travelers at [www.abilenevisitors.com](http://www.abilenevisitors.com). Follow Visit Abilene on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).