

# Round 'em up partner

by Frank Fieber  
photos by Shauna Klekta

**D**ust off your cowboy hat we're heading to the Northwest Round Up and Exhibition in Swan River, Manitoba. For more than a hundred years there's been an annual fair with a midway and all the country trimmings, including a farm display in the curling rink that includes a working miniature grain elevator, a thrashing machine, animals and exhibits to entertain and inform.

The rodeo is centered on a half-mile track and a 2500 seat concrete grandstand. Cowboys started coming to Swan River back in the late 1940s and by 1959 the rodeo turned professional. That lasted about a dozen years according to 83 year-old Dick Walker. Although Walker says he has never ridden a horse, he's been involved with the rodeo for many years.

"Cliff Clagett, a logger

from Birch River started the chuckwagon races and Harry Vold, from Okotoks, Alberta brought in the first rodeo," says Walker. "But it just got too expensive to carry on, so it reverted back to an amateur rodeo in the early 1970s; today we host the Manitoba Pony Chariot and Chuckwagon Championships," he says. The ponies are just about as fast and it's really exceptional racing, with up to 40 outfits competing. Swan Valley is accredited on the amateur circuit so you'll see a lot of young cowboys who must qualify before they can move on to professional rodeo. Cowboys from Saskatchewan and Alberta – from the Canadian Amateur Cowboys Association and the Manitoba Rodeo Cowboy Association compete in at least five qualifiers: steer wrestling, bare back-bronc riding, Saddle-bronc, tie-down roping, calf roping and bull riding.

A stock contractor supplies three semi loads of steers, calves, bucking

horses and bulls. When the stopwatch starts and the chutes open — you won't be able to sit still or keep quiet. Everything kicks off on Thursday night with a barbecue, then a parade on Friday. There's something for everyone in the family from the heavy horse pull to the fiddle contest and the talent shows... not to mention the food.

The Swan Valley Agricultural Society runs the rodeo and fair. There's a single pay gate for the whole event with a reduced rate for all days, July 26 to 29. There are hotels and campgrounds; there are 25 spots for campers right on the grounds. Call Colleen Immerkar at (204) 734-7318 — see ad page 33 or visit [www.northwestroundup.ca](http://www.northwestroundup.ca) ■

