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Spring is in the air

We have changed things up some this month at NTFR magazine, featuring not one, but two cowboys on our cover.

As the dust settles from the excitement of the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, we had time to catch up with two of the world's best headers in team roping- who both happen to make their homes in North Texas.

Close family friend to the Clay Smith family and NTFR contributor, Judy Wade, takes us behind the scenes with the world champion, who won his first team roping head world championship at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo after finishing with a single-season record of \$289,921. See what the 27-year-old roper from Bowie has planned next.

Meanwhile, he wasn't the only header to bring home a buckle to North Texas. Fifteen-year-old Ty Woods of Decatur brought one of his own back after winning the open with a 10-year-old cowboy he met during the back-pinning ceremony at the Junior NFR. His plans? To be exactly like Smith – a good man and an NFR world champion.

In Farm and Ranch, Rayford Pullen is getting excited seeing all the little ones doing their tricks in the pastures, driving their mothers crazy, especially when they run in packs. It's the little things that make us smile.

Dave Reiter joins us this month as a guest contributor to discuss blockchain technology and the cattle industry, while Pepper Stewart provides steps to take in aiding ranchers in keeping their risk of cattle theft down. Lindsey Monk joins us all the way from Montana for the very first time to provide us with a little Ag Elsewhere.

In equine, Janis Blackwell keeps her promise to feature Delaney Wolf, wife of Paul Wolf, who along with his good team roping mare, Nemo, was the subject of last month's Equine Superstars. This month we learn about Delaney's cutting mare, Ivy.

Gary Metcalf, DVM, discusses stifle problems and injuries with readers. Phillip Kitts provides some behind the scenes information on marketing stock bulls, while Lacey Corbett talks Rodeo Houston.

Don't miss a new event this year, Cowgirls and Champagne, benefitting the annual Cowboy True. This annual Wichita Falls event will be here before we know it as it gets ready to celebrate the working cowboy.

If you're in need of some comic relief, check out Andy Anderson's take on a very bad day in Confessions of a Hunter.

Tony Dean brings us Wooly Croton, a member of a very large family of flowering plants called Euphorbiaceae. Check out his article to see if this plant poses risk to your livestock.

Finally, visit our calendar of events for local festivities, upcoming rodeos and more. If you have an article topic, photo or event you would like to see in a future issue of NTFR, send it our way at editor@ntfronline.com.

Wishing you all the best this March,

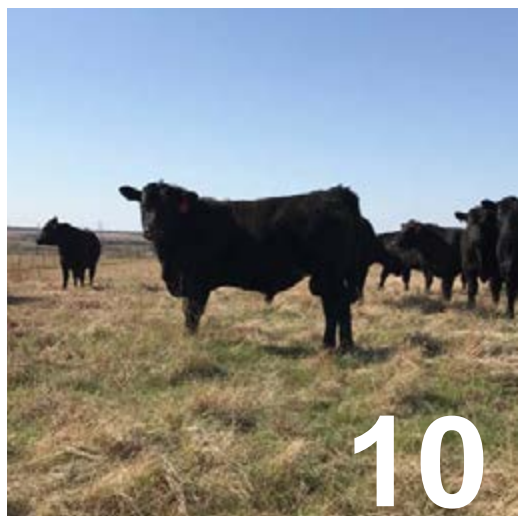
Dani Blackburn



ON THE COVER

North Texas cowboys brought home the buckles in heading at the National Finals Rodeo and Junior NFR in Las Vegas Vegas in December. Pictured is (left) the 27-year-old cowboy from Bowie, Texas, Clay Smith, who won the world title with year-end total winnings of \$289,921, and (right) the 15-year-old roper Ty Woods from Decatur, who earned the world title in the open with a pint-sized 10-year-old he met just before the start of the competition.

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North Texas Headers

The 27-year-old Bowie header Clay Smith grabbed the world title at the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas. Meanwhile, 15-year-old Decatur cowboy Ty Woods earned first in the junior open in team roping.

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Livestock shows are in full swing around the Lone Star State with the best and brightest showing off their animals, projects, and more importantly, hard work and dedication. Don't miss upcoming shows in our events calendar on page 67.

TWITTER FEED



LETTER TO THE EDITOR


NTFR welcomes letters to the editor for its Socializing page, but some rules apply. They include:

1. 125-word limit.
2. Deadline for submission is the first Wednesday of the month.
3. Only one letter per writer per issue.
4. All letters must include a name, address and phone number. Only the name and city of residence will be published.
5. All letters will be verified by the NTFR staff by a phone call prior to publication. If the NTFR staff is unable to contact the writer of a letter, the letter will be held until contact is made.
6. Letters containing libelous statements or those intended as advertising will not be published.
7. Letters that target previous letter writers will be edited to remove the name of such letter writers who are non-candidates or non-public figures.

Letters critical of previously published guest columns may identify the writer only once, and then only to make it clear which column they are writing about.

8. NTFR reserves the right to edit or reject any letters.

9. Letters must be mailed to NTFR Letter to the Editor, P.O. Box 831, Bowie, TX 76230 or emailed to editor@ntfronline.com.



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MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

By Rayford Pullen | rcpullen@yahoo.com



Spring is just around the corner, and I'm so excited I can hardly stand it. Going into winter with limited hay, very little winter grazing because the soils were super saturated and a cattle market that needed some help, we're now at the time of year when we can scale back on supplemental feed and enjoy the green grass and legumes that will soon be putting on their Sunday clothes.

While this is March and we are right smack dab in the middle of calving out our cattle, it's hard not to get excited seeing all the little ones doing their tricks in the pastures, driving their mothers crazy,

especially when they run in packs. I guess that's why we enjoy what we do so much: it's the little things that make us smile.

While we hope to complete calving by the end of March, we always have a few stragglers that wait until April, and the occasional May calf.

As mentioned in previous articles, a calf's rumen becomes functional when it's about eight weeks old, and for calves born in February and March it is off to the races when spring arrives with the best forage of the year and a great supply of milk.

Calves born in April and May miss out on this abundance of for-

age and milk since they will not be eight weeks old until June or July when the forage quality declines, resulting in less gain.

The mommas may also be a little slower to breed back for the same reason. Spring is the crème de la crème for our cattle, and with a little management we can take advantage of all it has to offer for the benefit of our cattle and ourselves.

Winter also is an expensive time for seed stock producers as we try to get our bulls in tip top shape to be turned out with calves in the next month or so.

Around our place we put a lot of emphasis on developing bulls

that are in the best condition to turn out on cows and ready to breed. Now I know buyers like bulls that look good and fat looks good on cattle, but the truth of the matter is that when you buy a bull, you are not going to take him and let him down by keeping him in a lot, limit feeding him until he is in breeding shape. Nope, you are going to open the trailer gate in the pasture and tell him to "get'er done" while he looks in disbelief that there are no feeders and wonders how he is going to get all those cows bred when he's not in shape.

Granted round is a shape, as I can attest to, but not the shape we

need him to be in. Bulls normally lose their teeth during their first outing with the girls so now we are requiring them to make do on what we offer, which is pasture grass instead of the sweet smell of a complete ration that is delivered by truck or sack. I recommend buying an athlete instead of a locker calf if you don't want them to melt away breeding cows and shrivel up like a raisin and not a grape. Good shape is important since a bull will have his mind more on the girls than the grass and yes, it is okay for him to lose weight, but not at the expense of not being able to stay on the job three to four months.

Which brings up another subject, and that is the number of cows a bull can cover or service, which should really be worded "how many cows can a bull cover in 60 days, 120 days or 365 days?" While I'm not as smart as I'm supposed to be, I would venture to say most folks have calves born spring, summer, fall, and winter (or at least two of the four), and

while I don't know how many cows a bull can breed if they all came in heat on the same day. Let's just say it depends. That 14 or 20-month-old bull you're buying soon will be three to four months older when the last of your cows come in and he will be a little older. So, let's just say a bull with good-sized testicles and shooting hot rounds should breed 20 plus cows when he's young and 30 to 40 when he's three or so.

While a fertility test can sometimes be subjective, make sure that in addition to a good report on the swimmers, your bull has a complete breeding soundness exam for feet, legs, eyes and two testicles comparable in size.

If you do know how many cows a bull can cover in one day, let me know; I'd like to know because Siri doesn't understand me most of the time and I don't want to blow her away because she does give good directions when she can figure out my twang.

It's a wonderful time to be in the cattle business. (N)

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AG *elsewhere* CALIFORNIA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LAINEY SMITH

What if I don't have anything to say?

Alright folks, the buzz word of the day is agvocacy. (Cue cheering, clapping and a general uproar).

This play on words, meaning to be an advocate for the agriculture industry, is supposed to fill us with excitement, pride and a sense of duty. We have been called to join the Ag militia, to protect our farmland from the evil, invading mainstream.

However, more often than not, mention of the topic of Agvocacy fills us with fear, anxiety and the sense of yet another weight on the shoulders of a person whose entire income comes from one

crop check a year.


In the era of causes and movement; profound thinkers, commanding speakers and great leaders may have us feeling like we have nothing meaningful to say, or there is so much that needs to be said that we don't know where to start or there is so much misinformation about agriculture used to incite fear in consumers, we are afraid to poke the beehive and create frenzy. Have any of those thoughts crossed your mine? They've crossed mine. They've crossed every person's mind that has felt the call to defend something they are passionate on. Their

passion just may not have also been their livelihood.

Relax. You don't have to change the conversation on GMOs, Organic Farming, Go Vegan or any other hot topic revolving around agriculture. Start by telling your story. The main issue with hostility toward farming and ranching comes from the average consumer being four generations removed from agriculture. Without first-hand experience, misinformation has become fact. You do not have to go head to head with the opposing groups or yell louder. Be part of the conversation by telling your story.

Post on social media, snap a photo of a sunrise over your farm, walk your audience through your typical day, share little known facts about your industry, make your profile public, utilize common hashtags and tag accounts with larger audiences, like the @usdagov or @texasagriculture.

One of the aforementioned great leaders reminds us, "You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step." (Martin Luther King Jr.)

Written by Lainey Smith, freelance writer for North Texas Farm and Ranch and owner of Out West Marketing. 

AG *elsewhere* MONTANA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK

"Since this is my first contribution to Ag Elsewhere in a Texas magazine I felt a Texas Longhorn cow in Montana was appropriate. This winter has been mild so far thankfully, we're feeding cattle and chopping ice daily."



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THE GARDEN GUY

By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker

Narcissus, Trumpets of Spring *Bring Incredible Joy*

The first hint of spring is trumpeting, so to speak, in North Texas with the arrival of the narcissus, or daffodil. I hate writing about flowers that are opposite their planting season, but, on the other hand, there are certainly some lessons that can be learned. The biggest lesson is which ones will naturalize in your area. You have to admit that looking at a catalogue of daffodil blooms will make you want each and every one.

Over the years I have been blessed to go to farms in Louisiana with Bill Welch of Texas A&M while he was researching for his book “The Southern Heirloom Garden.” Seeing acres of naturalized *Narcissus Campenelli* will be an everlasting memory. While most of us don’t have acres of land in which to cultivate, we would like to see our daffodils become happy and to naturalize. In the hot and humid conditions of the South, many of those famous large selections may look great the first year but offer few if any

blooms the second. In no way am I disparaging these varieties. On the other hand, recently I was assisting a commercial horticulturist with a large project where 20,000 bulbs would be planted in a high-profile location. We needed the bulbs to look good the first year and the subsequent ones, too. I knew what I was taught at Texas A&M, but I needed a little reaffirmation.

I turned to the book “Daffodils in Florida” by Linda M. and Sara L. Van Beck. To me this is the definitive guide allowing our region of the country not only to create, but reside in daffodil heaven.

We decided to go with Carlton for the large 20,000 daffodil display. This 1927 selection was one of the varieties engrained in my memory as being superior, but what does the book say about Carlton? It says this flower should be the backbone of any daffodil bed. True enough, it has been a remarkable selection.

Perhaps in your specific area, Carlton won’t be a stalwart performer. **See SPRING page 19**



Soleil d'or is terrific narcissus from the 1700s. (Photos by Norman Winter)

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Spring

former, but I assure you there is a narcissus that will bring cheer to your landscape. Speaking of cheer, when I was at the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens in Savannah, Ice Follies was proven to be a winner as was a small 1934 double tazetta by the name of Erlicheer. It brings out the cameras just as quickly as a large trumpet.

The Grand Soleil d'Or is another tazetta, dating back to 1770, always showed out now in our Mediterranean Garden.

Daffodils prefer sunny locations, although open shade will not prove to be a big detriment. For best naturalization, plant your bulbs in a well-drained area. Raised beds rich in organic matter are perfect for combining pansies and daffodils. Plant the bulbs about twice as deep as they are tall, five to six inches for large bulbs and three to five inches deep for smaller ones. Spacing six to eight

inches apart will allow for increasing in size before crowding.

One of the biggest mistakes gardeners make in growing daffodils is cutting the foliage after the flowers have diminished. The leaves are vital to next year's bloom. Leave them growing as long as possible or at least eight weeks. I'm proud to say our high visibility location lets the daffodils grow until the foliage disappears on its own. The result has been an amazing stand getting not only naturalized but increasing in size.

I would be remiss if I didn't urge you to grow the daffodil in mixed containers as well. Containers with pansies, violas and dianthus will become like a spring crescendo of floral beauty. This spring, seek out the best narcissus for your area and then plant in the fall, and you too will enjoy the beauty for years to come. Follow me on Facebook @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy.®



Narcissus partners beautifully with tulips. (Photos by Norman Winter)



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BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY

and the CATTLE INDUSTRY

By Dave Reiter

“It’s impossible to stop the forward progress of technology.” – author unknown, circa 1910.

This statement is 100 percent correct. Although the author of this quote was never known, historians agree the quote appeared in a Wall Street newspaper in 1910 during the height of the Technological Revolution. This time period was historically significant because it marked the beginning of Henry Ford’s meteoric rise to fame, thanks to the release of the Model T automobile to the general public. Ford became one of the wealthiest and most successful entrepreneurs in United States history.

Officially, Ford introduced the Model T in October 1908 with a sticker price of \$825. Immediately, sales began to skyrocket. For the first time in automotive history, the average American could afford to own an automobile. Thanks to Ford’s assembly line as well as his constant effort to increase efficiency, the price of the Model T declined every year for the next several years. By 1916, the price had dropped to \$360. By 1918, half of all cars in America were Model T’s. Thanks to Henry Ford and his use of the assembly line, the automobile eventually became a standard item for most Americans (as opposed to a luxury item).

Not surprisingly, Ford received tremendous “pushback” from the horse and buggy industry. In fact, the industry made several attempts to pressure lawmakers in Washington, DC., to outlaw the automobile due to safety concerns. On a few occasions, representatives from the horse and buggy



Blockchain beef will be sold in retail stores as “premium beef” because consumers will have the ability to trace the beef from the rancher’s pasture to the consumer’s plate. (Photo by Jon Nunneley)

industry almost succeeded in shutting down Ford’s automobile operation.

Inevitably, Henry Ford’s automobile proved to be too much for the horse and buggy industry. The public fell in love with the automobile while the horse and buggy faded into obscurity. Henry Ford’s story is a perfect example of how it’s impossible to stop the forward progress of technology. Today, we find ourselves on the precipice of a new innovative discovery known as blockchain technology. What is blockchain technology and why is it so important?

Most likely, you have probably heard of a digital currency called Bitcoin, which was released in January 2009 by Satoshi Nakamoto. Bitcoin also is known as a cryptocurrency. In fact, Bitcoin is the original cryptocurrency. Several other cryptocurrencies have been introduced during the past decade (known as “altcoins”). However, they never approached the level of Bitcoin’s popularity.

In many instances, Bitcoin is similar to any other currency, like the United States dollar. For example, it can be used as a medium of exchange to pay for goods and services. Bitcoin also can be held in an account as a store of value, much like consumers store their U.S. dollars in a bank account.

All Bitcoin transactions are stored on a digital ledger. This is where blockchain enters the picture. In its simplest form, blockchain is a digital decentralized ledger that keeps a record of all transactions that take place across a peer-to-peer network. The major innovation is the fact that the technology allows market participants to transfer assets across the internet without the need for a centralized third party. In other words, blockchain technology removes the middleman from all transactions. That is the “pure beauty” of blockchain: it eliminates the need of the middleman (or third party).

When Nakamoto created Bit-

coin, he simultaneously created blockchain as a means of digitally recording all Bitcoin transactions. In fact, a strong argument could be made that blockchain technology is probably a more important invention than Bitcoin. Why? Because the blockchain can be used for many other important things besides recording Bitcoin transactions.

In a nutshell, blockchain technology (or “the blockchain”) is nothing more than a ledger. It’s a simple way to record transactions. However, instead of recording the transactions on paper, the transactions are recorded and stored digitally.

Many people allow themselves to become confused about the blockchain when they hear words such as “distributed ledger,” “peer-to-peer network” and “centralized third party.” These things are all an important part of blockchain technology. However, it’s not important to understand this terminology for the purpose of our discussion concerning the blockchain. Instead, the most important thing to take away from this discussion is that blockchain technology is on the verge of invading all aspects of our daily lives.

During the next decade, the blockchain will completely alter the way consumers work, communicate, shop, travel, eat and educate themselves. This transformation to a blockchain society is just beginning. To borrow a phrase from the world of baseball, we’re probably in the second inning of a major league baseball game. Full-scale adoption probably won’t occur until the mid-2020s.

See **TECHNOLOGY** page 22

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TECHNOLOGY

Continued from page 20

A great way to view the adoption of blockchain technology is to compare it to the internet from the 1990s and 2000s. Internet advertisements began appearing in 1994. However, it took eight years before 50 percent of the American population was using the internet on a daily basis. After 2002, internet usage began to explode. By 2006, 70 percent of American households were using the internet regularly.

Can you imagine trying to survive in today's society without the internet? It would be practically impossible. The blockchain will be viewed in the same manner as the internet. Ten years from now, we will wonder how we survived without this type of technology.

These days, blockchain is

slowly entering its way into different industry groups. Thanks to a partnership between IBM and Wal-Mart, the food industry is becoming one of the first adopters of blockchain technology. With help from IBM, Wal-Mart is working with some of its overseas fruit suppliers to implement traceability of all fruit products shipped to its United States locations. This type of program can only be accomplished using the blockchain.

The state of Wyoming also is joining the "blockchain party" with a start-up company called BeefChain. A select group of Wyoming cattle ranchers have partnered with BeefChain by placing their young steer calves on the blockchain through the use of radio frequency identifica-

tion tags. Thanks to this exciting new technology, BeefChain can provide 100 percent traceability of each steer calf placed on the blockchain ledger. The entire life-cycle of each animal is available for viewing by all parties involved in the transaction.

Of course, there will be some people who might be skeptical of blockchain's ability to provide 100 percent accurate record keeping. Blockchain is a completely new technology. Therefore, it's only natural to be skeptical. In fact, ranchers in the cattle industry have every right to remain skeptical when it comes to electronic tags such as RFID. Why? These tags have been used throughout the cattle industry over the years.

The tags were sold to ranchers

as a way to track the life cycle of each animal. Unfortunately, the cattle ranchers soon discovered the data on the RFID tags could easily be altered and manipulated. As a result, the tags became useless because nobody within the cattle industry trusted the accuracy of the data.

Blockchain technology completely eliminates the issue of trust and manipulated data. Why? The blockchain is immutable, which means each piece of data added to the blockchain cannot be changed. All participants in the BeefChain block can feel 100 percent certain that all of the blocks (i.e. data) on the blockchain are accurate.

In addition to immutability, the blockchain is decentralized. In other words, there is no central



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authority who controls the data on the blockchain. All participants have equal access to the data.

Not only does blockchain technology create a trusted digital ledger, it also has the ability to remove unnecessary layers of waste from a transaction. The removal of waste usually comes in the form of removing the middleman from the equation. In terms of BeefChain cattle, the middleman is the feedlot operator (or the processor).

In order to maintain the true integrity of feeding grass-fed beef, the BeefChain cattle are not taken to the feedlot during the final stages of the cattle's lifecycle. Instead, BeefChain is in the process of developing an end-to-end supply chain solution known as "Ranch to Retail." This program will allow BeefChain to offer exclusive long-term relationships with buyers throughout the country. Therefore, the premium typically received by the feedlot/processor is captured by the initial owner of the cattle on the blockchain.

Blockchain beef will be sold in retail stores as "premium beef" because consumers will have the ability to trace the beef from the rancher's pasture to the consumer's plate. Each individual package of blockchain beef will contain a special quick response code. The buyer can simply scan the QR code using a smartphone. The QR code will contain all of the information on the blockchain.

Of course, there are people in the beef industry who claim consumers will not pay a premium price for the blockchain beef. However, historical results have proven that consumers will pay for quality. A perfect example is the craft beer industry. This industry has literally exploded during the past 20 years as consumers have proven their willingness to pay a higher price for a quality product. The blockchain beef will experience the same results as craft beer. Consumers are willing to pay for quality.

In terms of consumer spending, blockchain technology is entering the United States economic landscape at precisely the right

time. Based on data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, the millennial population (born between 1982 and 2000) will increase to 73 million by the end of 2019. In fact, Millennials will represent the largest section of the U.S. population in 2019, surpassing the Baby Boomers. This is "good news" for blockchain technology because the millennial generation is entering its peak spending years, which typically occurs between the ages of 40 and 60.

Without question, consumers are demanding more transparency and accountability concerning the food they consume. This is particularly true of the millennial generation. They want to have the ability to trace the origin of their food from the original grower/producer to their plate. The blockchain accomplishes the task of traceability.

Beginning in 2019, many Asian countries will require 100 percent traceability of the beef purchased from overseas producers. Therefore, using blockchain technology will be a requirement instead of a choice. If you are raising cattle in the United States for overseas consumption in Asia, blockchain must become part of your business model.

As a general rule, people don't like change. They prefer to maintain a familiar routine, particularly as it relates to their jobs. However, whether we like it or not, blockchain technology (along with cryptocurrencies) is in the early stages of disrupting many different industries throughout the U.S. economy. The beef industry is just one example. There are many changes on the horizon. Always remember, "It's impossible to stop the forward progress of technology."

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are that of the writer, Dave Reiter.

Reiter is a proprietary trader of commodities and cryptocurrencies. The name of his firm is Reiter Capital Investments LLC. The website is www.ReiterInvest.com. You can follow Dave on Twitter @TradesByDave. ®



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"The cattle industry loses \$900 million a year to disease, and vaccines account for approximately \$15 per head per year for a typical cow-calf producer, so lets not waste our money."

Billy Whitehurst
University of Idaho Extension
(Quote in a March 2014 Progressive Cattleman article, "Vaccine Storage in a Work Setting.")



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RANCH, Rodeo & Randomness

By Pepper Stewart



CATTLE RUSTLING STILL EXISTS

Do You Know Where Your Cattle Are?

Cattle rustling is something that has never gone away. Since there have been cattle in the United States, there have been rustlers stealing them. The activity of the rustlers depends on the cattle markets: when prices are up, theft is up; when prices are down, theft is down.

When you think of stolen property and the resale values, cattle are at the top of the list for thieves. If someone steals your \$500 television the resale value may be around \$75, but a stolen \$500 calf sells for \$500, the full market value.

Cattle do not lose value when stolen as many other often-stolen items. Nearly each week on the Pepper Stewart Show broadcast are reports of stolen cattle in Texas and Oklahoma.

Join your state's Cattle Raisers Association to stay informed on cattle news and theft. We say it often and it still rings true: "know your neighbor but brand your cattle." Here are a few steps you can take to aid in keeping your risk of theft down, but none are 100 percent:

- Brand your cattle and make sure your brand is registered with

your state agency. State brand inspectors at cattle sales write down all branded stock.

- Change up your feeding routine in lease pastures. Thieves often study your feeding habits.
- Count your cattle every time you feed.
- Know your neighbors. It never hurts to know a little about those around your pastures if you don't speak to them often.
- Have someone check your stock if you are not around. Going on vacation or out of town for a few days? Have a person or two you trust to keep an eye out.

- Set up motion-detected game cameras out of plain sight near gates and barns. You'll be surprised at what you see. Check them often.

Anyone who raises livestock is a potential target, but there are steps you can take to keep your odds of theft down. Those of you who live on the same property as your cattle will be at lower risk than if your cattle are on lease pastures with no nearby residents.

In recent weeks the possibility of increased cattle exports is a hot topic, and if that happens, prices will rise and so will theft. Ⓜ

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Stock Contractor Marketing

By Phillip Kitts

The sport of rodeo has a history as rich as the great United States of America. It is often discussed how much the sport of rodeo is truly an American original. Since countries like Brazil, Australia and many others have a lineage that runs parallel to what we consider the “Cowboy Sport,” there is question about where it all began. Other country’s events may not have started the same or have the same fundamentals, but the competitive result is a mirrored conclusion.

The origins of American rodeo are clouded on how exactly it started. Several events around the country claim they had the “first rodeo,” and proving that to be a fact could be next to impossible. One theory, and one that the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association leans toward, is the sport originated with the Spanish Vaqueros who brought their events and versions of rodeo to the U.S., which was passed on to the American Cowboy.

No matter what country you are from, it is quite possible that it all started the same way. What ranch had the toughest cowboy, who could get the job done fastest, who could break the rankest horses and survive the wildest bull?

The more traditional belief in American rodeo comes from several states around the U.S. where they say the sport came to be when ranches around the country would identify some of the toughest men and livestock in their operation and pit them against each other in competition.

On occasion, ranch owners would place bets their man, or their livestock, could outperform another, and the stage would be set for a competition.

This competitive nature is why



As with any sport there is a base set of people who are the true meat and potatoes that make it all possible. In the case of rodeo, this core set of people is the stock contractor.

and how most rodeo events can trace their roots back to the working cowboy.

With the basic understanding of modern pro rodeo and its events, it has always seemed that the sport of rodeo has spent its existence decades behind all other things American. The slow growth within the sport is often attributed to the lifestyle and geography of the western lifestyle.

Many years have passed in which the culture of location of the “cowboy” or “rancher” has not had to rely on modern technology to accomplish their work or earn their wages. Because the soul of rodeo generates around people who continue to live the western lifestyle, this has had a direct link to the lack of technology.

As with any sport there is a base set of people who are the true meat and potatoes that make it all possible. In the case of rodeo,

this core set of people is the “stock contractor.” In its beginnings, the job of a stock contractor started with having horses and bulls that would buck, steers and calves that would run and the understanding on how to get them to arenas and put on a show.

In the early days of rodeo, it was not uncommon to go to a local sale barn and see rodeo stock contractors buying livestock right off the pasture that would just days later find themselves in the rodeo arena.

All things in the modern day have changed, and what used to be a basic rancher with an appreciation for a sport has turned into a full-time task of coordinating logistics of travel, scheduling, running and managing a full-time mobile operation.

Now breeding, genetics, feed programs and marketing and promoting drive the daily operations

of the stock contractor.

The question that comes to mind is, how effective and how much does this focus really benefit both the contractor as well as the sport of rodeo?

As the Professional Bull Riders has identified, the sport of bull riding alone is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. It may be arguable this comes in connection with the newest thrill of extreme sports, yet others continue to suggest that the newest marketing focus of social media and digital platforms has allowed sports like rodeo to reach whole new audiences.

One of the essential points of the modern contractor is driven by the invention of social media, web-based marketing and real time release of information. You can now find most every major stock contractor dedicating time
See CONTRACTOR page 28

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CONTRACTOR

Continued from page 26

and energy to keeping their social media feed filled with results of events as well as footage of their top animals.

Not only does the new world of social media keep the rodeo fan and other competitors up to speed on news and information, but also opened a whole new way to highlight top animal athletes. Social media alone has daily posts where stock contractors can expose their pride and joy to both rodeo fans as well as the officials and administrators who select stock for some of the top rodeos in the world. This digital jockeying is so prevalent that some contractors have even gone as far as dedicating an entire team to nothing but social media and digital marketing.

What does this mean for what used to be the able and willing

rancher? Does this new digital world influence which stock contractor a rodeo uses? How many rodeos use a contractor based on years of loyalty, history of production or simply because of a reputable name?

Less than 25 years ago contractors would rely on word of mouth about how well their stock performed and how efficient they were as a contractor. Not so many years ago, marketing meant setting up booths at conventions like the National Finals Rodeo and other big venues. This growth put them in front of plenty of potential rodeo committees and made for better odds at booking rodeos.

Digital progress drove things into the digital age. This growth has become the definition of make it or break it in the business. The

new age in rodeo marketing and being a modern stock contractor have forced a more technological approach. The new focus not only has most all major stock contractors hosting and updating website but paying specific attention to their presence on social media.

Currently there is no way to truly identify how much the digital and social media approach influences how many and which rodeos contractors can secure.

There is no tangible proof that social media activity can increase a contractor's ability to see their stock perform at the NFR or other big events.

However, the belief that making a good bucking animal a household name through digital exposure seems to carry some weight. During the 2018 NFR





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Less than 25 years ago contractors would rely on word of mouth about how well their stock performed.

more than 60 percent of the live-stock that competed at the venue had seen social media exposure at minimum of twice throughout the year.

So, does this new approach make the risk worth the reward considering the stock contractor relies on revenue from booking

events that can be the main source of income throughout the year? Add to this the profound amount of money than can be earned with an animal winning a round at a place like the NFR.

It makes the new digital approach to marketing seem to have an immense value. ^(N)

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BEHIND THE CHUTES

By Lacey Corbett

Thoughts from a Rodeo Wife

“Houston, Houston means that I’m one day closer to you.”

Do these lyrics ring a bell? The words and the melody to this Larry Gatlin country song have been stuck in my head for the last three months. The singer is really referring to his sweetheart, and Houston is the last stop on his tour. Houston plays a much different role in our current situation; it’s the first stop on Logan’s, my cowboy husband, rodeo tour, and it’s a big one.

Last year was the first time Logan earned the opportunity to compete at Rodeo Houston. I remember the time of year perfectly. Conlee, who was one at the time, and I had pulled over into a shopping center parking lot so we could “watch Daddy ride buckies” and live stream the performance. It wasn’t quite Logan’s turn yet, and I had her sitting in the front seat on my lap so we could watch the action unfold on my phone. Like toddlers do, she started crying, uncontrollably in fact. Well, those cries turned into an episode of vomiting, and it just kept coming. When it was all over, my dashboard, gauges, steering wheel, console, front seat, crying child and lap were covered. You can bet we missed Logan’s ride to place in the round.

That’s life though, isn’t it? You learn to roll with the punches and play your hand as it’s given to



Logan Corbett hopes to re-enter the playing field this month at Rodeo Houston. (Photo courtesy Lacey Corbett)

you, even if it means driving home without pants on and praying you don’t get pulled over.

If you’ve been following our story, you may recall a little mishap that happened in August resulting in Logan having to miss the rest of the 2018 rodeo season, a surgery and weeks of physical therapy and rehab. It’s been a fall and winter of “rolling with the punches” and Lord willing, he will get to re-enter the playing field this March at Rodeo Houston.

Rodeo Houston is a game changer for any cowboy or cowgirl who gets the opportunity to compete. Only the top 40 contestants in their event from the prior professional rodeo season

are invited to showcase their skills. The cash prizes awarded can immediately catapult you in the standings of professional rodeo. In years past, this rodeo has not been affiliated with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association; therefore, winnings did not affect world standings and the race to the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas in December. This year the story is different. For the first time in a few years, it is actually a PRCA sanctioned rodeo and can be the force that sets the winning wheel in motion. It is nestled amongst some other lucrative winter rodeos that, when luck and hard work come together, can push a contestant high into the

rankings. With more than tens of thousands of dollars on the line, Rodeo Houston can be just what a guy needs to get the ball rolling in 2019.

The bracket-style structure of the event is unique, as well. In the bareback riding, the 40 competitors are divided into sets of eight. Each competitor gets a chance to try his luck on three horses. The top four money earners in each set will qualify to a semi-finals round with hopes of later qualifying for the final short round at the very end. Consistency is key, but big flashy rides definitely help a cowboy’s case.

We are extremely thankful Logan gets another opportunity to compete at Houston. Not only is it a great paying rodeo, the rodeo committee really strives to make this a great event for competitors. The hospitality is top notch, and that means a lot to men and women who spend their lives on the road. We were able to claim a small piece of the pie in 2018, which only made Logan even more hungry in 2019. I’m excited to see how the first rodeo of the year turns out. We have a tribe of people who have helped Logan prepare for this event. Win, lose or draw, we will make the best of whatever happens and continue to roll with the punches. However, you better believe I’ll be watching from home and not from a shopping center parking lot.®

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THE ALL-AROUND COWGIRL

By Krista Lucas

Cowboys and cowgirls of all ages dream of making the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo one day, and Kylie Conner is no different.

The Louisiana cowgirl's rodeo roots run deep, and she is already well on her way to accomplishing her dreams.

"I got my start in rodeo from my parents," Conner said. "My dad rode bulls, and my mom barrel raced, roped, goat tied, and ran poles."

Conner has followed in her family's footsteps, competing in four events. Rodeo is not for the faint of heart and is filled with many ups and downs.

"My favorite part about rodeoing is the time I get to spend with my family and how humble it makes you," Conner said. She has been extremely dedicated to her craft, putting in the hours it takes to become a successful all-around competitor.

"My whole family has always been behind me since I started riding," Conner said. "Also, Talmadge Green in the barrels and Jade Conner in the breakaway." The high school cowgirl does not get much down time with her busy rodeo schedule, but she likes to make the most of any free time she does get.

"I like going to our deer lease in Junction to hunt when possible, but rodeoing keeps me pretty occupied," Conner said. "I also go to church every Sunday when I am home, and if I'm not home, I try to find a church near where ever I am."

Conner's list of accomplishments is lengthy. In 2018, she won the Louisiana High School Rodeo Association All-Around championship and was the 2018 All-Around Rookie Cowgirl.



Louisiana cowgirl Kylie Conner is well on her way to accomplishing her dream of making the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. (Photo courtesy Kylie Conner)

She did all of this as a freshman, competing in barrel racing, breakaway roping, goat tying, and pole bending. She also was the 2018 LHSRA champion barrel racer, qualifying her for the National High School Rodeo Association finals. She went on to qualify for the United Finals Rodeo, where she won the 2018 All-Around Cowgirl title as well as the Rookie Barrel Racing title.

In December, she punched her

ticket to Fort Worth by winning the Junior American barrel racing qualifier in Jackson, Miss. Her more recent wins include Wildfire's Rope Like a Girl Breakaway in Hamilton, Texas, last month.

Conner saw her name next to some of the greatest women in roping and proved she belonged there. She roped her calf in 3.03 seconds to win the second round and \$750.

Conner is just as handy with a

rope as she is with a barrel horse.

Texas is known for producing rodeo athletes, but just one state over is one of the most promising all-around cowgirls around.

Conner has three more years of high school but already has her sights set on bigger and better things.

She hopes to continue to rodeo throughout college and to maybe one day compete at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo.

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Equine Stifle Problems and Injuries

By Garrett Metcalf, DVM

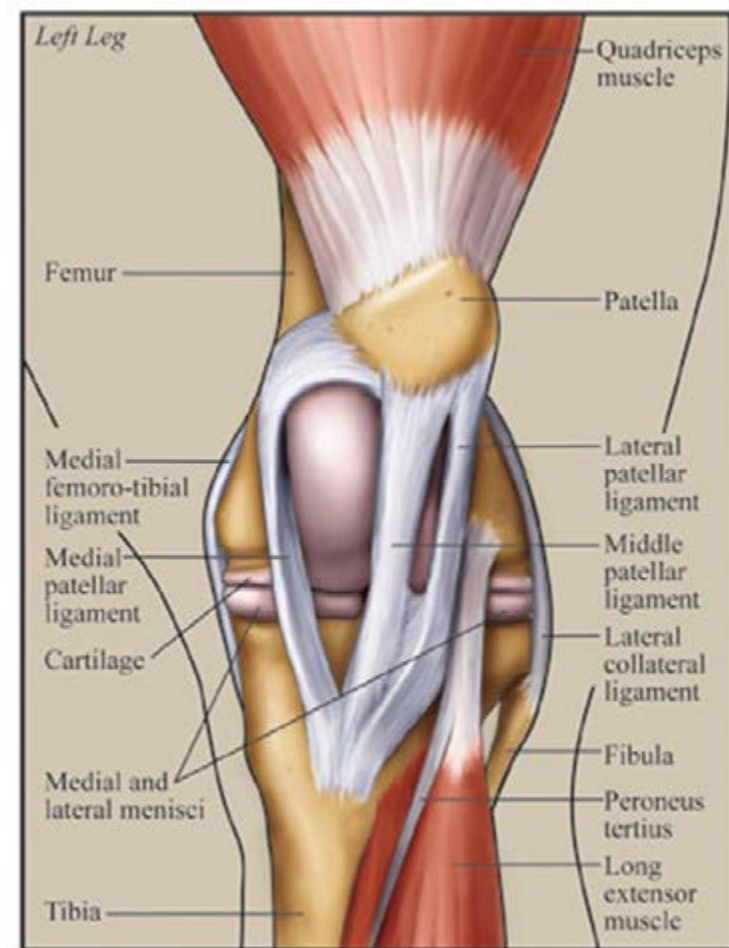
No horse owner wants to hear their horse may have a stifle injury, but hopefully when it does occur you can rest a little easier after reading this article. There is a fair amount of misnomer and hearsay about what it can mean for the horse if they suffer a stifle injury. It used to be common thought when a horse was “stifled,” that the horse’s career was over, and the horse was unusable, but that stigma about a stifle injury is no longer true.

The stifle is one of the most complex joints horses have and a large contributor to the locomotion a horse needs to perform and do large amounts of work in the hind limbs. The stifle, no doubt, has its own set of problems, but veterinarians have grown to understand this joint and its problems much better in the recent decade or more through research, advancement in diagnostic techniques and treatment options.

The equine stifle is built very similarly to the human knee. It has a patella, menisci and cartilage very much like our knee, but the equine stifle is divided into three different joint compartments. These are the medial (inside) femorotibial, femoropatellar and the lateral (outside) femorotibial joint compartments. The joint compartments that get the most attention and have the most problems are the medial femorotibial and femoropatellar joints. These two compartments share the same joint fluid in approximately 67 percent of horses.

The equine stifle also has cruciate ligaments just like the human knee that are commonly referred to in humans as ACL and PCL ligaments, but thankfully they are not as commonly affected in horses as they are in people.

Stifle issues can start at birth



Equine stifle injuries should be taken seriously. (Courtesy photo)

due to developmental orthopedic issues or occur as injuries later in life. The lesions that arise from birth or as neonates are part of the developmental orthopedic complex, which includes osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) or subchondral bone cysts. The cause of these lesions is not fully understood and is believed to be caused by multiple factors.

Factors such as nutrition, genetics and trauma/exercise have been incriminated in causing the development of these orthopedic lesions. There are common locations that these lesions develop in the stifle joints of horses. The OCD lesions are commonly found in the femoropatellar joint in specific areas on the femur bone

called trochlear ridges. Bone cysts form in a different location on the femur, most commonly in the medial femorotibial joint.

Stifle injuries can occur in any horse and any discipline, but these injuries are more commonly seen in western performance horses such as reining horses, cutting horses, rope horses, and barrel horses. These disciplines that demand a lot of work from the hind limbs can lead to injuries to the stifle joint.

Common stifle injuries are damage to the articular cartilage, straining or tearing of ligaments that hold the menisci in place or tears in the menisci themselves. The joint that takes the blunt of the work and most often has the most

injuries is the inside joint or the medial femorotibial joint compartment. This compartment contains the medial meniscus where a lot of wear and tear takes place.

To localize or diagnosis a stifle injury requires a lameness exam, palpation of the stifle joints to check for excessive joint fluid, intra-articular anesthesia to isolate the lameness to the suspected joint compartment and imaging of the stifle joint.

The most common imaging tool used to look at the stifle joint is with radiographs or x-ray. Multiple views or projections are needed to look at different aspects of the joint from different angles to make a thorough radiographic assessment of the joint. If a soft tissue injury is suspected in the joint, an ultrasound of the stifle joint can be performed.

Even MRI is becoming available with the advancement of newer machines that are designed narrower allowing the limb of the horse to be placed high enough into the machine to be able to image the stifle. Unfortunately, these imaging options have their limitation when it comes to fully diagnosing an injury in the stifle joint; therefore, performing an arthroscopic examination or scoping of the joint is often necessary to diagnose and treat the injury.

The arthroscopic surgery allows examination of important structures in the joint like the meniscus, ligaments and cartilage of the stifle joint where the most common injuries occur that cannot be fully imaged by the techniques mentioned above. When it comes to treating OCD lesions or bone cysts, the best option, and frankly the only one in many cases, is surgery to remove the OCD bone fragments or treat the bone cyst arthroscopically.



Stifle injuries do not always require surgical intervention to treat the pain coming from the joint. If lameness is isolated to the stifle joint but no specific lesion is found with X-rays or ultrasound and the lameness is not severe, the joint may just be inflamed from trauma or overuse, which can be controlled with intra-articular medication. The key reason for the formation of arthritis or joint pain is from inflammation. This can be controlled with several different drugs or biological products that can be directly injected into the affected joint.

A common treatment is a combination of steroids and hyaluronate sodium injected into the joint to control or block the inflammatory cycle. Biological treatments are products that are harvested from the horse, processed and placed into the affected joint.

These products include IRAP

(interleukin-1 receptor antagonist protein, PRP (platelet rich plasma), stem cells or a combination of PRP and IRAP in one product (Pro-Stride). These biological products have various properties to control inflammation, deliver growth factors and repair damaged tissue, respectively, and are great options to treating many different causes of joint injuries in horses.

Inflammation can also be treated and controlled systemically with oral NSAIDs such as phenylbutazone or firocoxib.

Other methods to help with joint health are using products containing proteoglycan molecules such as hyaluronic acid and glycosaminoglycans which come in various formulations for different routes of administration.

Upward fixation of the patella or a locking stifle joint is a common problem in young horses going through training.

Horses have a locking mecha-

nism built into the stifle to allow them to conserve energy while they rest standing.

Signs of locking or catching stifle can be very obvious to a horse that is subtly catching when ridden. This condition often gets worse with more work and fatigue.

Treatments for mild cases of upward fixation of the patella include controlled exercise such to increase quadriceps and gluteal muscle mass with internal blistering of the middle and medial patellar ligaments.

More advanced cases of upward fixation of the patella often fail to improve with exercise and blistering treatment, requiring a surgical splitting of the medial patellar ligament.

Surgical splitting of the medial patellar ligament had a 98 percent success rate published in a recent retrospective research article.

Internal blistering and split-


ting of the ligament both lead to scaring and enlargement of the ligament to make it easier for the horse to unlock the patella.

The last resort is transection or cutting of the medial patellar ligament, which has a higher set of complications in athletic horses and requires prolonged rest to avoid complications.

If you suspect any of these joint injuries or problems in your horse's stifle, then it is best to see a veterinarian who has experience in equine lameness.

Injury to this joint should not be ignored but rather addressed quickly for the best possible outcome to be achieved.

There are many possible injuries that can occur, but with an accurate work up of the lameness and imaging techniques available, a diagnosis can be reached.

With an accurate diagnosis, the proper treatment plan can be made for each individual horse. 

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EQUINE SUPERSTARS & EVERYDAY HEROES

By Janis Blackwell

Ivy

As promised, this month's article features Delaney Wolf, wife of Paul Wolf who along with his good team roping mare, Nemo, was the subject of last month's Equine Superstars. This month we learn about Delaney's cutting mare, Ivy.

Ivy is the barn name for Stop Ichin, a 13-year-old mare sired by Cat Ichi, a son of High Brow Cat who earned more than \$300,000 cutting and has produced \$5.5 million in earners. She is out of a dam named Sassy Soda, a non-pro cutting mare who won about \$70,000.

Like Paul, Delaney attended Tarleton State University in Stephenville and was a member of and competed on the Collegiate Stock Horse Team. During that time, they were taking lessons from Jerry Palmer, a cutting horse trainer in the area when a good friend, Marty McCormick, who trained Nemo for team roping, suggested they go look at Ivy. He sent them some pictures of her which they shared with Palmer, who learned that Ken Mock, a good friend of Jerry's, was her trainer and contacted Mock. He told Palmer if his clients could buy Ivy, they definitely should, that she was a great horse but she was a little behind where her current owner wanted her to be for the futurities. Since she wasn't going to be ready for the futurities, he didn't really have any use for her. So in the words of Delaney, these two broke college kids who had no business buying a young cutting horse managed to trade one of Paul's horses and a couple thousand dollars for her, a trade that was an unbelievable deal and



Delaney Wolf on Ivy. Wolf says Ivy is the kind of horse that makes you a showman. (Photo courtesy Jo Haigwood)

ultimately made them the owners of a very nice, winning cutting horse. Delaney said that for the caliber of horse Ivy turned out to be, she was a steal.

Delaney purchased Ivy in 2010 when she was four years old and continued to work with Palmer, only now she was training with Ivy under her. Palmer took the mare to shows every weekend for Delaney and got the mare to the place of being a seasoned, finished cutting horse. The Wolfs had to pay her show bill, but the help hauling and showing the mare under the experienced hand of Palmer was a huge asset well worth the cost, and Ivy mostly paid her own way. If Ivy placed, she got to show the

next weekend. She was such a talented mare that she managed to place often enough to pay her way to being a finished horse.

Having Ivy be a finished and seasoned horse helped Delaney because she had always ridden cow horses and done team penning, but she had never ridden a cutting horse. She wanted Ivy to be confident in herself and her performance before she rode her in competition. So, for that first year Delaney owned her, she just exercised her and helped with her care but did not work her on cows, and as previously noted, she continued to have Palmer ride her, wanting to give the mare every advantage to be as good as she could.

The first time Delaney showed her was at the Abilene Spectacular in 2012.

Delaney had never even worked her on a cow at that time. The second time she showed Ivy was at the National Cutting Horse Association Super Stakes where they were one half point from making the finals. Delaney says Ivy is the kind of horse that makes you a showman, and if you do your job, she's going to mark a big score and bring home money. Since Ivy aged out in 2012, the team has shown in the \$50,000 Amateur class. She added cutting is just natural to Ivy, and that she stays trained and hasn't been to a trainer
See IVY page 38

Ivy

Continued from page 37

since 2012. Ivy is a consistent 73 to 74 scorer in the cutting pen, and one of Delaney's best memories of their partnership was scoring 76 in a show at Denton. They also were the Area NCHA Champions for their show area. Their prep for a show is to work a little on the flag or cows the week before a show, and she is ready to go. Delaney added she stays sound and is easy to keep and ones like her don't come along very often. I asked how she was to live with when they were at home. Delaney laughed and said, "She's the queen of the pasture," and added that she runs the other horses. Ivy hates to be clean and would rather be a "big mud-ball." She lets the kids ride her around and is very laid back at home, but when she gets to the show, it's all business.

Two years ago Delaney flushed an embryo out of Ivy and now has a two-year-old colt named Patrick who is ready to go to training. Patrick is by SR Instant Choice. With Patrick's career about to launch, Ivy will go into semi-retirement this year and start another career as well. She will be bred and carry this foal herself.

Ivy will remain with the Wolf family to bring more champions into the world and maybe one day soon help the Wolf children become champions in the 4-H or Texas Junior High School Rodeo arena.

We look for really good things in the future out of this really nice mare, her offspring and her talented owner.

Until next month...Happy Trails.®



Delaney Wolf with Ivy. (Photo courtesy Paul Wolf)



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Spring is coming and I am excited for some color. Who doesn't love serape and jumpsuits? This super cute jumpsuit is something you can wear all year, shown here with a long sleeve shirt underneath, but also can be worn with a tank top. It also comes in red serape, and you can find both on my website. Top it off with a concho belt and turquoise boots, also on the site, and you are set. Check it out at www.jessesjewelz.com Photo credit: Susana Clare photography. ®

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HEADERS

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As the dust settles from the National Finals Rodeo and Junior NFR in Las Vegas, North Texas Farm and Ranch magazine had a chance to sit down and catch up with world champion headers Clay Smith and Ty Woods, who both just happen to make their homes in this great state.

Smith, the 27-year-old header from Bowie, was destined to be a team roper. Named for seven-time World Champion Team Roping Heeler Clay O'Brien Cooper, he was roping from the time he was big enough to swing a loop, beginning with dummy ropings at all the major events across the country.

Before he was old enough to get a driver's license, he had already won three trucks and a trailer. Smith and his partner, Paul Eaves, entered the NFR in December knowing it would be their last time to rope together. They made it count, and after 10 grueling rounds, left Vegas as 2018 World Champion team ropers.

Clay wasn't the only header to bring home a world title to North Texas. Fifteen-year-old Ty Woods of Decatur was paired with 10-year-old Michael Calmelat from Arizona in the back pinning ceremony at the Junior NFR Open roping championship. Two days and five rounds later, the two young strangers were world champions.

The 2018 NFR was just the beginning for both, as Smith continues to pursue his dream of winning as many World Championships as he can. He moves forward with his new roping partner, Jake Long. For the younger cowboy, his plans are to be exactly like Smith – a good man and a NFR world champion.



TY WOODS

'Headed' to the NFR

When Ty Woods arrived in Las Vegas for the Junior National Finals Rodeo, his thoughts weren't on winning the open with a pint-sized 10-year-old he had never met. He was there to win a championship with his best friend and roping partner, Catcher Gasperson.

"I had expectations of winning the number 10 division. Catcher and I were good enough, there's no reason we shouldn't have won, but we just didn't do any good. That's why we were there, we worked all year for it," explained Woods.

The best friends from Decatur, Texas, had spent the last year traveling the country, from Decatur to Colorado, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico, working to qualify for the Junior NFR.

Halfway through the year, Woods decided to throw his hat in the opens, with a shot at qualifying for both in Vegas, and managed to do just that by the hair on his chinny-chin-chin. The 15-year-

old son of Tony and Christi Woods and Dianna Woods would go to Vegas ranked sixth with partner Gasperson and 15th – last for the open.

"We had our standards set to win, but not the open. Winning it came from our blind-sides," recalled Woods.

Partnered with a young Michael Calmelat, it is safe to say the duo entered the competition as the underdogs.

"We were matched in the back-number ceremony, and it was this little 10-year-old kid, and they're like here's your partner, Michael Calmelat. I was thinking, this kid is 10, and we're up in the open against all these others. There are 17-year-olds and they're already nines and 10s, numbered ropers," said Woods.

The Decatur roper wasn't sure what he was getting himself into, but the two shook hands and got to work.

Continued on page 46



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TY WOODS

'Headed' to the NFR

Continued from page 44

"Someone told me he was good, so I just tried to stay consistent and catch all of them, going for the average," explained Woods.

The strong underdogs made a statement right out of the gate by catching the first one out.

"Everyone was like 'Oh dang, you can't do that again' and kept telling us it wouldn't happen, but you know what? We ran the second, then the third, then the fourth, and finally the fifth and won it," recalled Woods.

The rounds didn't go without some wobbly moments and a bit of good luck, but the strangers did what they do best to create a strong partnership. With Woods heading and Calmelat heeling, they took home the gold buckle.

"We drew a runner and I got kind of nervous. It was a lucky head loop I just barely stuck it on him, and it kind of sat there. I was lucky it stayed on, but Michael came around and doubled him so that was good," recalled Woods.

The first catch was good enough to land the duo in second place with a 5.83-second run. They shortened that time in the second with a time of 5.38 seconds, followed by a 6.09. A 7.98 in the fourth landed them in fourth place and boosted them to number two going into the

short go, where they had an 8.96, placing them in first. When leaders Kreece Thompson and Cole Curry went without a catch for the first time all week, Woods and partner Calmelat were the new world champions.

"It was fun, Michael is really quiet, he just goes out there and ropes and says a word or two and goes on. He's pretty shy, but he can heel," said his partner.

How did it feel for a 15-year-old kid to win one the biggest rodeo events on the world stage?

"Amazing. I had butterflies in my stomach, but I think my parents were more excited than I was," grinned Woods. His parents, including dad Tony, stepmom Christi Woods and mom Dianne Woods were there to see it all.

The road to Vegas started when Woods was just a tiny tot, on his family's land in Sunset. His dad had rodeoed and roped in high school, when a business venture started at a young age took off.

The elder Woods hung up his rope to follow the business route, focusing on his family, while always hoping at least one of his two sons would want to follow in his footsteps.

His oldest, Ryan, instead found a love for motocross, a passion Ty followed his brother in for a few years before a broken arm and two surgeries had him returning to the saddle.

"We had a 200-acre ranch and I grew up around horses and animals. I started rodeoing when I was five, we did the Kid Junior Rodeo Association's until I was about eight or nine then my brother started racing motocross. I thought I would give something else a try for a while, but a few years into it I broke my arm. I always loved riding, and was still doing so, and got back into rodeoing with my best friend," said Woods.

Gasperson's father, Willy, helped Woods hone his roping skills, teaching him to head. It was at the Gaspersons that Woods' four-legged partner, the 15-2, now 20-year-old Grey came into the picture.

"He is a big ol' huge-headed horse," laughed Woods. "He isn't papered. I started off on a red roan named Jellybean Catcher had ridden. A rancher came out to their house one evening and told me to try this horse. He told me he was pretty automatic, just a great solid head horse. We ended up buying him, but I wasn't for sure I wanted him. I was kind of nervous, he's pretty strong and was a little much for me at the time," recalled Woods.

The morning after the purchase, Woods took the grey to a jackpot in Graham, where the two won first, second and third, but the young roper remained anxious.

"I stopped riding him for a while, I thought



he was a little much for me. I don't know why I stopped. We bought another one whose name was Rooster, but I finally started back up on Grey. I was more consistent on him and got the right bit in him, and it just worked," said Woods.

Meanwhile, Tony Woods came on board, promising to support his son in his new venture.

"It is something I have backed. I told him if he would give me 110 percent, I would give him 110 percent, and part of that is keeping your grades up and doing what you are supposed to do. If that is what you are going to do, then let's get a plan and put it together and go after that. Anything is achievable as long as you put your heart and soul into it. That's pretty much my standard for him, is to be a champion," said the roper's father.

So far, the teenager has lived up to those expectations, never taking a day off with astounding dedication rarely found in adults, much less young men.

Woods wakes up before the sun, feeding his horses before heading to Decatur High School, where he is a freshman. After school, he rushes home to pin up his horses, before heading to his roping partner's house, where the pair can be found practicing until late into the evening.

There's always homework and makeup work from his time on the road. Despite his long hours, Woods is on the A and B honor roll, with some help from teachers.

"It is hard. We miss a lot of school and I have to make up a lot, but all the teachers are really nice and understanding about it," said Woods. His dad agrees.

"We have been pretty fortunate there, Decatur has been really good to him. They let him make up his work for what he's doing, it's a testament to Decatur with how they are with the rodeo kids because it's not sanctioned by the school. There are a lot of cowboys who live in Wise County, so that probably helps us," laughed the dad.

His friends aren't quite as understanding, chuckles Woods, who explains they just don't get it.

"They're like 'Oh, you're something, just a goofy cowboy.' It really is just me and Catcher that actually rodeo. There's a handful of them who rope jackpots around Wise County and stuff, but we are the only two that stay on the road and practice every single day," explained Woods.

However, it's not all work and no play for



Ty Woods and his 10-year-old partner, Michael Calmelat, receive their buckles after taking first place in the open at the Junior National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas last December. (Photo courtesy Tony Woods)

the header, who enjoys the lifestyle as much as the sport he fell in love with.

"There are good people around and you have a lot of social time for everybody. You get to meet a new person every day. I enjoy every minute of it," said the teenager.

The young cowboy continues to work hard, with plans to 'go everywhere' he can during 2019, including a few World Junior Qualifier (the new name for the Junior NFR) events.

He also will be training a new horse, a dapple grey by the name of Whistle.

"I'm excited to see how he turns out. He came off the Four Sixes in west Texas. He has been ranched on all his life, he is seven and we are starting him on the head side. He's bred really well," said Wood.

His father explains they are working to hone his son's horsemanship skills.

"We bought this horse to get him going on his own and try to make a horse for himself so he can correct horses as he gets older. I think it's imperative a cowboy becomes a good horseman. It's not just the roper, it's the mount you're riding that helps you get there," said Woods.

Where exactly is there? The NFR, of course. However, don't expect the young roper to get a big head anytime soon. He explains he was

raised to say 'yes mam and no mam' and treat others the way he wants to be treated. He makes sure to pick role models who do the same.

"Trevor Brazile, of course, 23-time world champion, he's for sure a role model. It's crazy how much he's done and he's just a great guy and a great dude to be around. He's from my home town. I want to be like him when I grow up, and Clay Smith. He's young, upcoming, and seems like a great dude. I just want to get pointers from everybody I can," said Woods.

It is what is exceptional about the sport of rodeo.

"Everyone in this sport, even your world champions, will take time and give you pointers and whatever the case may be, where you don't see that in a lot of other sports," said Tony Woods.

With the perfect mixture of dedication and love for the sport, there's no doubt the name Ty Woods is not going away anytime soon.

"I just love it," said Woods with a grin from ear to ear. "Really three years ago when I very first started back up, I wouldn't have thought I would be here today going as strong as I am and wanting to know that this is what I want to do with my life. I didn't think I would know that but now it is. I want to go to the NFR one day and be right where Clay Smith is now."

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A DREAM COME TRUE

for Clay Smith

By Judy Wade

Clay Smith arrived in Las Vegas in December 2018 for the 60th Wrangler National Finals Rodeo sitting at the top of the list of Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association headers with \$115,345 in winnings for the year and a dream.

After 10 grueling rounds, he left Vegas as 2018 World Champion Team Roper, a gold buckle, a trophy saddle and a dream come true. "I've worked all my life in the practice pen to rope that last steer in the National Finals," he remarked.

Smith and partner Paul Eaves won round two, placed in six other rounds and ended up third in the average to pocket another \$174,576, bringing their year-end total to \$289,921.

Named for seven-time World Champion Team Roping Heeler Clay O'Brien Cooper,

Smith was destined to be a team roper.

He was roping from the time he was big enough to swing a loop, beginning with dummy ropings at all the major ropings across the country. His brother, Jake, named for seven-time World Champion Header Jake Barnes, became a World Champion Dummy Roper at age five, and the two appeared on the Tonight Show, teaching Jay Leno how to rope.

"I threw my first loop from a horse when I was five," Smith shared. He worked his way up through junior rodeo associations, Texoma Junior Rodeo Association and Oklahoma Youth Rodeo Association, winning championships in both ropings with his brother, Jake. They were also entering and winning open jackpots.

A native of Broken Bow, Okla., he attended

Continued on page 50



A DREAM COME TRUE

for Clay Smith

school there through his eighth grade year and then was home schooled by his grandmother Betty Smith, a retired school teacher, so he could hone his roping skills.

His father, Mark Smith, a team roper and horse trainer, provided horses, cattle to rope and advice to the youngster. Dad even built a covered arena to allow practice year round. Mom, Tammy, a third-grade teacher, videoed so they could critique their runs.

Before Smith was old enough to get a driver's license, he had already won three trucks and a trailer. Younger brother, Britt, named after Britt Bockius, 13-time WNFR qualifier, soon entered the mix, and the three dominated the world of team roping.

A room in their parents' home is covered wall-to-wall and floor-to ceiling with saddles they have won. Cases hold hundreds of buckles, both testaments to these boys' ability. Smith, 27, joined the PRCA in 2013.

This was Smith and Eaves' fourth trip to the WNFR, but the duo had been roping together for four years. Eaves, 28, is from Lonedell, Mo., and has qualified

for the WNFR seven times.

They traveled more than 100,000 miles each year from rodeo to rodeo.

Both have trailers with living quarters, making it possible for their families to travel with them much of the time.

Some of their biggest wins in 2018 were rodeos in San Angelo, Mineral Wells and Dalhart, Texas, Fort Smith, Ark., the All-American ProRodeo Finals in Waco and the Ram Texas Circuit Finals.

The good gray gelding, Marty, carried Smith through all 10 rounds at the 2018 WNFR. Although he has no papers, the horse goes back to Hollywood Dun It and Smart Little Lena. At 15.2 and around 1,200 pounds, "He is the perfect shape to hold up. He's got enough bone," said Smith. "He always puts me in a spot to win. That horse has been a blessing."

Smith lives in Bowie, Texas, now with wife Taylor and son Jade O'Brien, named for Jade Corkill and Clay O'Brien Cooper, keeping the names and tradition alive.

He and Eaves decided it was time for a change, and Smith is now heading for Jake Long. They are presently in first place in the



Clay holding son, Jade, and wife, Taylor, holding Clay's gold buckle at the NFR. (Courtesy of the Smith family)



PRCA team roping standings.

Big wins already this year include Denver and the Texas Circuit Finals. They will compete in the RAM National Circuit Finals in Kissimmee, Fla., in April.

“We’ve had an unbelievable start to this year,” said Smith. Smith also recently won all six holes heading in the team roping at the Western Horseman Timed Event Challenge in connection with the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo, and he and Long won the Wildfire recently, Smith’s third time to win the annual event.

Smith’s talents are not confined to heading. His ability as a horseman allows him to compete in all of the timed events.

As a multiple-time contestant in the Timed Event Championship at the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie, Okla., he also heels, ropes calves, steer wrestles, and trips steers. A broken barrier kept him from winning in 2017, and in 2018 a mishap in the steer wrestling ended up with a broken bone in his right leg.

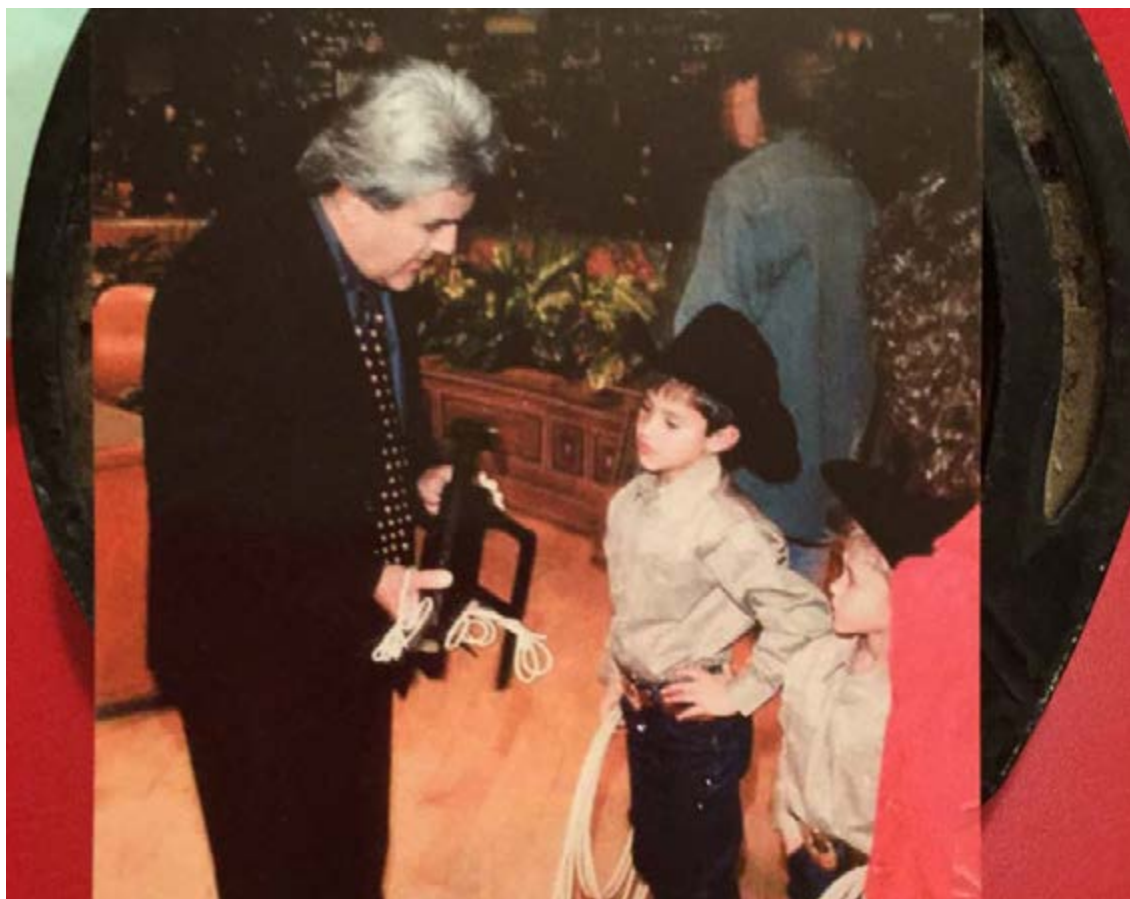
That broken leg didn’t keep him down long, unlike the broken back when he was 13.

“A horse flipped over backwards with me, and I spent 14 weeks in a brace. I could stand up or lie down, but I couldn’t sit down all that time,” Smith explained.

“My favorite rodeo would have to be Houston because they treat you really good, and the money is good. I’ve made it back to the final round, but I’ve never won it,” he added. This year the payoff will count in the PRCA standings, and with first paying \$50,000, winning it would go a long way to securing a spot at the NFR.

“My goal now is to win as many World Championships as I can. It is really nice to be able to do what I love and travel with my family,” Smith concluded.

(Pick up a copy of the March issue of Oklahoma Farm and Ranch Magazine to read more about Clay, Jake and Britt Smith.)



(Above) Clay, center, and Jake, right, on the Tonight Show teaching Jay Leno how to rope. (Courtesy of the Smith family) (Left) Smith and Eaves receiving their buckles and trophy saddles as PRCA World Champion Header and Heeler in 2018. (Courtesy of Clay Smith)



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2019 Featured Artist
Laine Smith

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Saturday, March 30

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Exhibit open to the public, live music and children's activities.

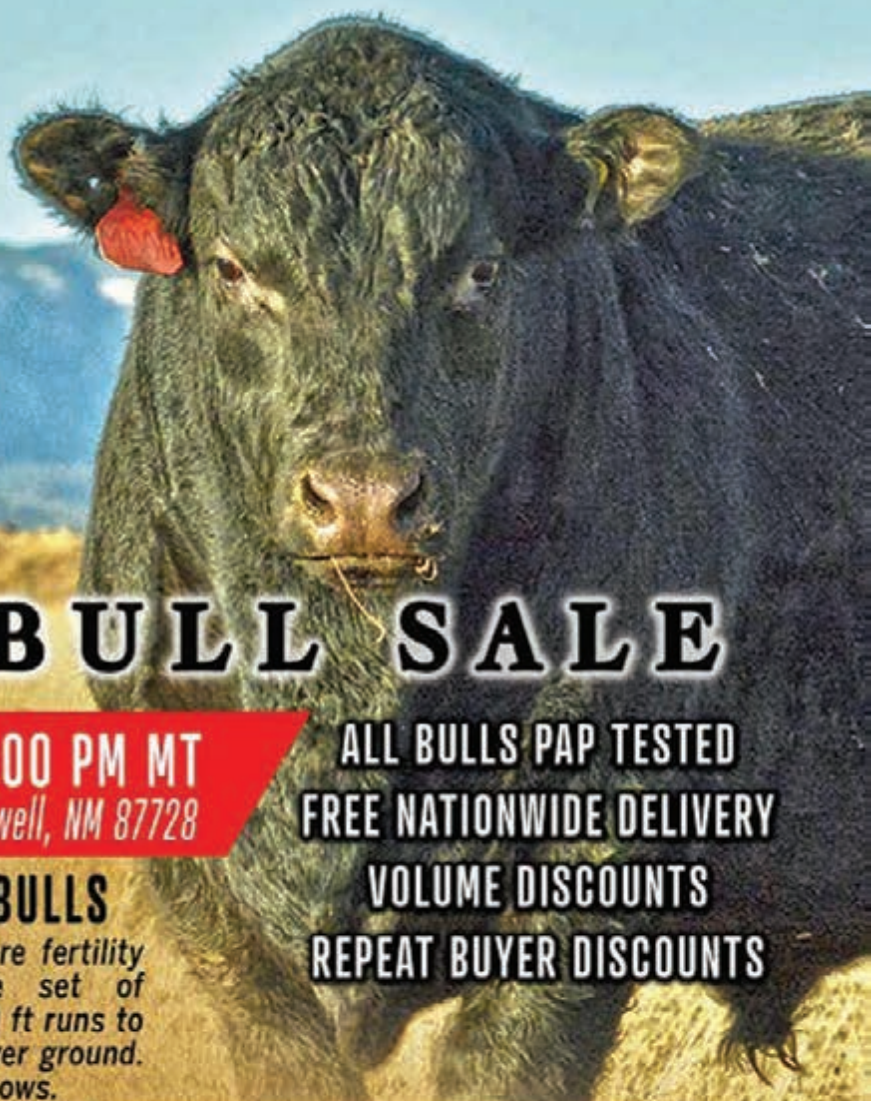
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LACEY'S PANTRY

By Lacey Newlin



Easy Butter Bread

Makes 2 Loaves • Time: 2 hours


Ingredients:

2 pkgs. active dry yeast
2 cups lukewarm water
3/4 cup powdered milk
1/3 cup sugar
1 tsp. salt
1/3 cup softened butter
6 cups bread flour

Directions:

Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water. Add sugar, milk powder, salt, and half of flour. Mix until smooth. Add butter and remaining flour.

Knead either by machine or by hand for 10 minutes. Place in greased bowl; cover, let rise until doubled. Punch down and shape into two loaves, place in greased pans. Cover. Let rise until doubled in size.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Bake in pre-heated oven for 30 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pan to wire rack to cool. Optional: brush loaves with butter. 

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WHEN A CITY GIRL GOES COUNTRY

By Annette Bridges

In my early years of country living I might have been described as a compulsive planner. Life on a cattle ranch would change that. I've learned to let go of unwavering expectations for how I thought my life or even my day was supposed to happen.

There is happiness in being ready for any possibility and ready to seize unexpected moments and opportunities. Happy is the life that is dazzled by each beautiful sunrise whether a cloudy or a sunny day. I've learned to be gracefully surprised by each and every event in my life – endeavoring not to be daunted, overwhelmed or exasperated when every detail doesn't pan out the way I had envisioned.

Yes, life on a cattle ranch is filled with the unpredictable and unplanned so all the better to embrace that reality.

Such an example happened one winter. Even though my husband tries to calendar the births of calves to avoid December and January, there often is that cow that got pregnant before he wanted her to. More than once Murphy's Law ruled the day much to my dear husband's dismay resulting in a calf being born during the worst weather conditions possible.

We were in the midst of a horrible winter storm. My husband was driving his four-wheel drive Blazer around the pasture to give the cows a final check before we headed to bed.

Our miniature dachshund and I were hanging out in the living room when through the front door enters my husband carrying a barely breathing sleet covered newborn calf. A mix of freezing rain and sleet at the time of its birth literally froze the poor thing to the



Annette Bridges has learned to let go of unwavering expectations for how she thought her life or even her day was supposed to happen. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

ground. My husband was able to pull her up and get her on to the floorboard of his Blazer.

He carried the poor baby to our guest bathtub where we both worked diligently to cover the calf in warm water while struggling to keep her head above it. It was not easy. We gently yet vigorously scrubbed to melt the ice off. Her body was so cold the hot tub water almost immediately cooled off. We kept adding hot water until we actually ran out. After towel rubbing and blowing with a hair dryer, my husband carried the near lifeless calf and laid her down on a rug in front of our gas stove.

The calf was weak and lay very still, and so our long night began.

One trait I can tell you about my country boy is that he doesn't give up. His dedication to life and survival for all entrusted in his care is unswerving.

I wish I had a photo of the scene. My husband lay on the sofa. I lay for a long while on the floor beside the pitiful calf rubbing her head, and our dachshund remained in her bed not far from the calf on high alert for signs of any life. I eventually moved to our loveseat and dozed, as the calf lay unmoving in front of the stove. Dawn was still a few hours away. We would wait till morning to find the mamma cow and hopefully reunite the calf to its mamma. That is if she survived the night.

Our dachshund turned into our barking alarm clock when shortly before daylight the calf woke from its frozen sleep and began trying to stand. We took the now very alive calf to our barn and my husband created a small playpen area stacked with hay bales for the calf to stay warm. The successful reuniting did happen and other than damage to her ears from frostbite, she grew into a strong and healthy cow. My advice to anyone adjusting from life in the city to the country is to allow yourself to be flexible and open-minded for the many unforeseen amazing adventures that will surely come. If you are a planner, plan to be surprised. ®



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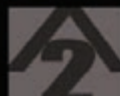
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NEW BENEFIT PAYS HOMAGE to the working cowboy

By Dani Blackburn

Champagne, caviar and fashion will combine to create an entertaining day for local cowgirls as part of a new benefit for the annual Cowboy True event in March.

The style show and brunch will be a place for the cowgirls to gather and give back to an event that has become a staple of the farm and ranch community in North Texas.

The eighth annual Cowboy True Art Show and Auction March 29 and March 30 will pay homage to the working cowboy, educating the region about the honor, art and beauty of the cowboy's daily life.

In its first year, the event was conducted at The Forum, but soon outgrew its walls, moving to the J.S. Bridwell Center.

This year, the event returns to its roots at The Forum, 2120 Speedway Ave., Wichita Falls, also home to the Champagne and Cowgirls event at 10:30 a.m. on March 16.

"We decided this would be a great way to promote Cowboy True. It is going to be a style show and a brunch with five different western wear stores who will have their clothes on models. We are excited about it," said Jane Ridenour, chairwoman of the event.

Ridenour came up with the idea after a visit to New Mexico and presented it to the Cowboy True committee.

"I saw it at Ruidoso at the track. I thought 'Ah ha! This would be great for us.' Mainly for us ladies, but the men are certainly behind this. We just thought it would be

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a fun thing to do, something not done here," explained Ridenour. "The models will be walking

through the tables, so guests can look at their clothes and ask questions. It is going to be an informal

type thing, but everyone should really enjoy it."

Tickets are only \$30 per person



and available at The Forum.

For more locations, call 940-766-3347 and visit artscouncilwf.org. Only 200 tickets will be available for this first-ever event.

"We set the price low. Having the event at The Forum, we can have tickets a little less expensive. We are hoping this might bring in some people who might not be able to afford \$50 or \$60, where it usually starts," said the chairwoman.

Touches of Cowboy True also will be visible at the event, with art pieces and old cowboy music playing.

Guests can enjoy the main event just a few weeks later, beginning at 6:30 p.m. on March 29 with the Art Exhibit opening. This event is free and open to the public.

Mingle with more than 40 juried artists who will be present with their artwork.

Beans, cornbread and hors d'oeuvres by the World Champion Chuckwagon will be available, along with live music by world-class strolling fiddlers and artist's award presentation.

The fun continues from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday as the art exhibit is open for the public to enjoy, with live music and children's activities. At 5:30 p.m., the Cowboy Up Dinner and Auction kicks off.

Cowboy chicken fried steak and all of the fixings by the World Champion Chuckwagon will be served.

Live music will continue to fill the air and guests will enjoy the curated auction.

Tickets for the dinner and auction are \$45 and available by calling 940-766-3347 or by visiting ArtsCouncilWf.org.

The 2019 featured artist is Laine Smith from Springfield,

Mo., who joins Cowboy True for her third year with her photography.

Categories for the artists include: Bits, spurs, buckles, jewelry, gun/knife engraving, saddles, boots, trappings/gear, photography, paintings, drawings, sculptures, carving and cowboy cartoons. With so many categories, the art pieces submitted are chosen by judges to ensure quality and that the artwork meets the mission of the show.

A highly anticipated new event this year is the Kid's Poetry Contest. Children will submit poems to reflect the question "What does being 'Cowboy True' mean to you?"

"A lot of people don't really know what Cowboy True is about in this area, and it is so big as far as the ranching and the farming. We thought with having the children doing something for the event, it

might bring in parents and grandparents and others who might not ordinarily come," said Ridenour.

Other photographers who would like to show the cowboy life are welcome to enter the 2019 Texas Farm Bureau Photo Trail Contest.

This year, the contest is open to photographers of all ages. To enter one of these events, visit <http://www.artscouncilwf.org/cowboy-true/>.

Cowboy True is always in need of volunteers with multiple positions available. Visit the website or contact The Forum.

All proceeds from the event go to The Forum to assist with programming and mission fulfillment, so mark your calendars for Champagne and Cowgirls, along with Cowboy True, it celebrates the working cowboy and the artwork that comes from their daily lives. ®



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TWO OF A KIND

Sharing History and Stories



By Mandi Dietz

Fortunate are those who inhabit an architectural gem, such as the former site of the Knights of Pythias.

Favored too are the occupants with complementary, but more personal, rich history and valuable stories, of most importantly, family, to share.

One topic can lead to another, and while exploring the reason some businesses stand the test of time, outlasting others, especially around Weatherford's Square, connections and historic reverence come to light.

Many passersby might overlook the unique, castle-style architecture or solemn silver knight perched high above Bennett's Office Supply, adorning the southwest corner of Weatherford's Square.

The knight's "twin" is in downtown Fort Worth, atop Sundance Square's focal, medieval-themed Knights of Pythias' Castle Hall and specifically, above its principal occupant, Haltom's Jewelers.

How most people scurry around without pausing to meet others or see daily beauty, such as picturesque sunsets, likewise, lots keep moving without stopping to appreciate precious, long-standing architecture and unmarked or unofficial historical spots, or shop at precious mom-and-pop stores, such as Bennett's.

Although, Bennett's can hold its own.

There's something special about longtime residents, such as Bennett's, going the distance, setting them apart.

Stepping foot into a place

where history permeates the air, from the artful exterior that alone holds a multitude of historical clout, to the peace and calm inside is a pleasant escape from modern-day chaos. Extremely high ceilings, simple but necessary merchandise for sale, and a single employee with more than 30 years of dedication to Bennett's behind the cash register is like traveling back in time. It is a precious preserved slice of life and a familiar feeling of comfort, which can't be bought, but instead, created through true care.

Family owned and operated with an emphasis on exceptional customer service, seems to be key for keeping the company doors of a small establishment open half a century.

"We try to treat people like

family," said Brian Bennett.

He and his wife are second-generation owners, buying the office supply store from his parents. His father first opened it in the 1960s, beginning with a Mineral Wells location, then expanding to Weatherford. Bennett said his father learned printing trade in the air force during the Korean War and wanted to open his own place, which he did.

"Printing and office supplies go together," Bennett said. The family's first printing practice sold long ago, and the second, kept separate, is in Mineral Wells and managed by Bennett's older brother.

With time, things change. Staff numbers may fluctuate from low to high and low again.

See TWO OF A KIND page 65



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TWO OF A KIND

Bennett said his father “semi-retired” but “never fully retired, until he passed two years ago.”

That’s dedication.

His father’s legacy lives on though through his businesses and the commitment of family members.

“All I’ve done all my life is work in the business,” Bennett said.

Neighboring QUICKPRINT, across the Square, celebrates 40 years of longevity, changing hands once when Carl and Vonda Norris bought it from founder, Jim Pope. Mrs. Norris agrees that customer service contributes greatly to their success, and she considers passing the business baton on to her daughter and son-in-law someday.

Because Bennett’s in Weath-

erford sells office supplies, their business works well with QUICK-PRINT, there’s no competition between the two. As Mr. Bennett said, the trades “go together.” They can help one another, and that’s essential for endurance.

Per Bennett, their Weatherford structure previously housed the Knights of Pythias’ lodge.

Interestingly, the Pythias’ sister property in Fort Worth once occupied the Tarrant County city’s “first offset printing press,” according to fortworthtexas.org.

The Fort Worth location, built around 1881, burned after about 20 years but promptly underwent repairs.

Restoration, including a replica of the original knight, occurred in 1981.

An international order, es-

tablished during the Civil War, the Knights of Pythias’ Texas organization “strives to build relationships and serve for the betterment of our communities and its children by means of various programs and the Texas Pythain Home.”


The Home, known as the “castle,” located on 164 acres of farmland on Weatherford’s Bankhead Drive, provides “a safe, stable environment for children to grow physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually to become responsible, independent adults.”

The Home works with families to care for their children day-to-day during difficult times, such as homelessness, incarceration, drug and alcohol abuse and more.

Considering the Knights of Pythias commitment to bettering

the lives of children and the community, their former lodge and building seems to be a fitting place for a family-oriented business such as Bennett’s.

From the Bennett’s personal story and business success, to the unique site they occupy, rich history and loyalty lies beyond their doors, both inside or out. Similar to how behind every book cover awaits adventure, the lives of people inside historical locale possess their own stories to tell.

Two of a kind, whether twin knights and matching structures in nearby cities, community members, helpful neighbors, cooperative businesses, or family, we can all find something in common and make things better together both now and for generations to come. 



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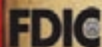


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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wise County Junior Livestock Show

FEB. 25- MARCH 2 • DECATUR

Decatur, Texas. Wise County FFA and 4-H students will showcase their hard work and dedication as the Wise County Junior Livestock Show gets underway. Plan to be there and show support for the local youth.

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

FEB. 25- MARCH 17 • HOUSTON

NRG Center, 3 NRG Park, Houston, Texas 77054. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo promotes agriculture by hosting an annual, family-friendly experience that educates and entertains the public, supports Texas youth and showcases Western heritage. Connect via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For ticket info and scheduling visit www.rodeohouston.com

RFD-TV The American

MARCH 2-3 • ARLINGTON

AT&T Stadium, 1 AT&T Way, Arlington, Texas 76011. Qualifying events take place across the country as ropers and riders hope to compete at the world's richest rodeo. Athletes are still competing in qualifying events in the hopes of earning a chance to rope and ride at the annual final rodeo event. Amateurs compete with a mixture of champions and top athletes from the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association and Women's Professional Rodeo Association. Starting at 6:30 p.m. on March 2 will be the "long go" for the rodeo with the top 15 in each event participating. Starting at 2 p.m. on March 3 will be the "short go" with the top eight and top four for the rodeo. www.americanrodeo.com/category/320696/the-american

From "Turkey to Tulsa, A Tribute to Bob Wills"

MARCH 5 • WICHITA FALLS

The Elks Club, 4205 Seymour Rd., Wichita Falls, Texas. Presented by Museum of North Texas History, a catered meal by the Elks kicks off the event followed by a program and dance with Susan and Kenny Mayo and "Post Oak." Tickets are \$35, museum members are \$30 and a reserved table of eight is \$240. The event begins at 6:30 p.m. For reservations call **940-322-7628**. Deadline for reservations is March 1.

Reverse Rocking R Ranch Annual Bull Sale

MARCH 12 • MAXWELL, NM

220 Laguna Madre Rd., Maxwell, NM. Selling 105 purebred angus bulls. Eighty bulls are 16 months or older. All bulls are fertility checked, genomic tested and complete set of performance data. Bulls are managed in 1,300-ft. runs to ensure a rugged, hard male bull. **630-675-6559** or svfchief@aol.com.

WF Ranch & Farm Expo

MARCH 13-14 • WICHITA FALLS

JS Bridwell Ag Center, 111 N Burnett, Wichita Falls, TX 76301. The Wichita Falls Ranch & Farm Expo features more than 350 vendors from 25 states and Australia, in over 175,000 square feet of exhibit space. The expo will feature a live production bull sale, wild west rodeo acts and entertainment, Beer Garden, plus more than \$5,000 in prizes and giveaways. Fun for the entertainment family. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension will be providing CEU's for Oklahoma and Texas producers through speakers and seminars. It is free to the public. For more information call **866-685-0989**.

COWBOY TRUE WICHITA FALLS MARCH 29-30



Cowgirls and Champagne

MARCH 16 • WICHITA FALLS

Kemp at the Forum, 2120 Speedway Ave., Wichita Falls. Cowgirls and Champagne is a new event featuring a brunch and style show on March 16 at the Kemp at the Forum. It is a prequel event to the western art show Cowboy True on March 29-30. wichita-falls.org/events-list/champagne-cowgirls/

Lone Star Angus Annual Spring Bull Sale

MARCH 23 • GAINESVILLE

Cooke County Fairgrounds, 1901 Justice Center Blvd, Gainesville, Texas. 75 powerful ranch-raised bulls with breed leading genetics. For calves that weigh heavy and grade choice, Trust the Lone Star. Also featuring the Customer Appreciation Commercial Female Sale - top quality replacements. Email rodneym@lonestarangus.biz. www.lonestarangus.com

Denton County Junior Livestock Show

MARCH 24-30 • DENTON

North Texas Fair and Rodeo Grounds, 2217 N. Carroll Blvd., Denton, Texas 76209. Come out March 24-30 to observe local 4-H and FFA students as they exhibit their livestock. dentonyouthfair.com

The 55 Advantage

MARCH 26 • WICHITA FALLS

MPEC, 1000 5th St., Wichita Falls. 55 Advantage is a program for health-conscious seniors. Program membership is free. Programs are provided on a variety of health topics of interest to seniors. Lunch and dinner are provided for a nominal fee of \$4 per person. Throughout the year, health screenings are also provided to members. To join or for additional information, contact Karen at **940-764-7933**. www.unitedregional.org/classes-and-publications/55-advantage-1/

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Cowboy True

MARCH 29-30 • WICHITA FALLS

2120 Speedway Ave., Wichita Falls. The mission of Cowboy True is to educate the region about the honor, art and beauty of the cowboy's daily life. Cowboy True is a celebration to honor working cowboys and the artwork that comes from their daily lives. In 2019, Cowboy True returns to its roots at The Forum. Cowboy True was originally inspired as an effort to raise awareness and funding for The Forum, formerly the home of The Woman's Forum, which has a long association with the women and families of the North Texas cattle industry. Categories include: Bits, spurs, buckles, jewelry, gun/knife engraving, saddles, boots, trappings/gear, photography, paintings, drawings, sculptures, carving and cowboy cartoons. Friday night events include the artists' reception and opening, Saturday will see daytime activities and the exhibit open to the public, while Saturday evening will consist of a night dinner, live auction and entertainment. All proceeds go to The Forum to assist with programming and mission fulfillment. For more information, call 940-766-3347 or email cowboytrue@artscouncilwf.org. www.artscouncilwf.org/cowboy-true

Cattle Raisers Convention

MARCH 29-31 • FORT WORTH

Fort Worth Convention Center, 1201 Houston St., Fort Worth. Improve your ranch management skills, learn about state and national issues, enjoy live music and entertainment and shop the largest ranching expo in the region at the Cattle Raisers Convention on March 29-31 at the Fort Worth Convention Center. www.cattle-raisersconvention.com

District 9 Ropings

MARCH 30 • DECATUR

NRS Events Center, 309 CR 4228, Decatur, Texas. District 9 Ropings March 30 and April 27. District finals May 18. Saddles and breast collars to High Point Division Champions. Buckles to Champion Header and Heeler in all divisions. www.NRSevents.com or 940-393-7019.

Top of Texas Market

MARCH 30-31 • WICHITA FALLS

Ray Clymer Exhibit Hall, 1000 5th Street, Wichita Falls. Vintage. Unique. Re-purposed. Handmade. Eclectic. Presented by Wichita County Heritage Society, this event will entice visitors to enjoy the weekend shopping. March 30 and March 31 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. www.toptoftexasantiques.com

Premier Equine Auctions, "A Cut Above"

APRIL 5-6 • LUFKIN

George H. Henderson, Jr. Expo Center, 1200 Ellen Trout Dr., Lufkin. Mike Pedersen and Steve Friskup have joined forces to offer a "premier" sale in order to bring buyers and sellers together in a professional and friendly environment. "A cut above." Auctioneers will be Steve Friskup and Wade Shaw. Consignment deadline is March 1. On Friday, April 5, cutters will be shown on cattle or mechanical cow while selling; roping reiner and barrel horse demo and premier riding horse session selling ropers reiners, cutters, sorters, penners and pleasure horses. Consignment fee is \$250, includes cattle charge, eight percent commission, no PO fee. On Saturday, April 6, will be a premier mixed session. Visit www.premierequineauctions.com.

Red River Wine & Beer Festival

APRIL 6 • WICHITA FALLS

J. S. Bridwell Ag Center, 111 N. Burnett St., Wichita Falls. Novices to connoisseurs can choose from 44 different Texas wines to sample and craft beer tastings, all under one roof. Each guest receives a souvenir wine glass plus an official guide listing a profile of each winery at the festival and details about their offerings that day. When guests are not tasting wine, they can sample specialty beers in the Beer Corral tap their toes to live music or learn more about wine at one of the winery booths. www.redriverwineand-beerfestival.com

Denton Redbud Festival

APRIL 13 • DENTON

Denton Civic Center, 321 E. McKinney Street, Denton. The award-winning Denton Redbud Festival is Denton's Official Arbor Day celebration – promoting community beautification and Denton pride since 1994. The Denton Redbud Festival features dozens of vendors. kdb.org/programs/beautification/denton-redbud-festival/

Germanfest

APRIL 26-28 • MUENSTER

Muenster, Texas. Muenster throws one of the biggest parties in Texas, Germanfest, the last full weekend in April. This three-day festival attracts thousands to mouthwatering German sausage, scrumptious apple strudel, hearty cheese and homemade bread, cakes and pies. So, come to Muenster and let us be your host for food, fun and frolic. Be sure to bring a "guten appetit." www.muenstergermanfest.com

Wichita Falls PRCA Rodeo

APRIL 26-27 • WICHITA FALLS

JS Bridwell Ag Center, 111 N. Burnett, Wichita Falls, TX 76301. PRCA Rodeo returns to Wichita Falls. Rodeo starts at 7 p.m. nightly at the J.S. Bridwell Ag Center. Events include barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, steer wrestling, team roping, calf roping and bull riding. PRCA Rodeo Association is a non-profit organization intending to preserve the heritage of rodeo while benefitting our area youth and community. <https://wichita-fallsprcarodeo.org/>



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On the Road with Dave Alexander



Howdy Texas music fans. It's early here in 2019 and already things are beginning to take shape for another great year in Texas music.

The "Young Bloods" as I call them, are beginning to emerge and I'm already seeing some very interesting things in our future.

Take Hayden Baker for instance. This new Texas act is beginning to turn some big heads in the music business and he's just getting started. Having just wrapped up 2018 with an opening spot for Willie Nelson, his breakout CD is full of his own compositions. I'm hearing a "Young Blood" with an "Old Soul" here and I like it. The title of his CD is "Born In The Wrong Generation." My favorite part is, He's a Picker.

Brad Paisley took an interest and praised him when he saw a video of Hayden covering one of Brad's guitar features. Nobody does that. Well, Hayden did.

He writes, he sings and he plays real Texas Country Music. Keep your eye on this guy. Odds are we've got a real one here.

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11 Reasons TO VISIT **THE SALT LICK BBQ** for your Sunday afternoon barbecue fix

By Michelle Ames

Barbecue is huge in Texas, and one of the biggest names is the Salt Lick in Driftwood. Located just about 15 minutes west of Austin, we love it for special occasions, Sunday afternoons and just anytime we need a barbecue fix. Here's 11 reasons why it's worth the trip.

1. The Salt Lick is located on more than 35 acres just 15 minutes West of Austin, so like Texas, it's a big place.

2. You can choose to sit inside in the air conditioning, or out under the shade of the trees. The live music on the weekends might help you burn a few calories as you tap along, but you'll probably just replace it with their homemade chocolate pecan pie, or ice cream, or both.

3. They don't sell beer or alcohol at The Salt Lick but you can step next door to the Salt Lick Cellars and buy a bottle, or bring your own.

4. That's about 4,000,000,000 delicious calories on that plate. You can purchase by the plate, by the pound or all you can eat for only \$24.99. They have kid's plates, too.

5. Their lemonade is a must have, and they make it right in front of you.

6. Take a walk around the vineyards at the Salt Lick, which has four different grape varieties.

7. The Salt Lick Cellars is the Salt Lick's Wine Tasting Room. Try the BBQ White.

Just a heads up, children aren't allowed at the Salt Lick Cellars. You can buy a bottle and take it back to the restaurant.

Or leave the kids with the grandparents....



One of the biggest names in Texas barbecue is the Salt Lick in Driftwood. (Photo courtesy Michelle Ames)


8. Your furry best friend is welcome at both The Salt Lick and Salt Lick Cellars. The promise of a beef rib is reason enough for any pup to be excited about going.

9. The Kid's Ranch is located beside the dining area, under plenty of big trees. It's a huge playground, perfect for taking the kids to run off their lunch.

10. Even their picnic tables lure you to just take it easy and relax while you watch the kids play. You can get your lunch to go and eat under the shady trees while the kids play, or just take them before or after you eat.

11. As if all this isn't reason enough, you can bring your own hammock and sleep off your lunch

or dinner in the Hammock Garden. I've honestly thought about staying here after dinner and being first in line for lunch the next day.

Camp Ben McCulloch in Driftwood also has campsites and swimming holes along Onion Creek. 

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Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean

Wooly Croton

Croton is a member of a very large family of flowering plants called Euphorbiaceae, or most of us know it better by its common name of the spurge family. There are more than 7,000 members of this large family worldwide, including Castor oil plant, Poinsettia and Milkweed.

Included in this spurge family are about 1,300 members of the croton clan, with about 20 of them calling Texas home, including Wooly croton. Wooly croton is common throughout the state but less common in extreme west and north Texas. Other common names of this plant include hog wort, hogweed, dove weed and goat weed.

Wooly croton is an annual, having to germinate from seed each spring instead of coming back from roots of last year's plants. It reaches heights of 12 inches to 36 inches, has a grayish color and is covered by a dense pubescence, or small hairs, that look like matted wool under magnifica-

Grazing Value of This Plant



Wooly Croton

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Wooly croton is of little value to livestock.

tion. The leaves have an aromatic smell when crushed.

Male and female flowers, largely inconspicuous, are arranged on spikes at the end of the stems. The fruit is a small capsule having three segments and containing three individual seeds. The small groups of seeds are yellowish in color with a purple or rusty tint.

Wooly croton is most common on disturbed or abandoned cropland and in rangeland and pastureland that has a history of heavy grazing use. It can, however, come up in a dense grass cover if rainfall is high enough.

Wooly croton has a bitter taste to livestock and is of very little value for grazing. There is a question whether it is actually

poisonous to livestock, but it is thought that livestock could be affected if enough of the plant were consumed. This is not likely in normal grazing situations but could occur if consumed from livestock eating hay containing enough of the plant.

The dense, stellate hairs of Wooly croton are easily shed when handled and can cause eye irritation.

Most crotons, including Wooly croton, are beneficial to wildlife because the mature seeds are highly desired by dove, quail, turkey and other birds. Croton is sometimes used in wildlife seed mixes.

Several species of croton have a long history of medicinal use

in Africa, Asia, and South and North America. Popular uses have included treatment of cancer, constipation, diabetes, digestive problems, dysentery, external wounds, fever, malaria, pain and other uses.

Despite serious safety concerns, people still take croton seeds for a variety of uses. Croton seeds and croton oil are currently available on the internet. However, we should leave croton to beneficial use by dove and quail and not try to use it ourselves.

A review of WebMD provided the following:

Croton seeds are unsafe when taken by mouth or put on the skin. One drop of croton seed oil can cause side effects and 20 drops of oil can cause death. Croton seeds can cause burning of the mouth, vomiting, dizziness, stupor, painful bowel movements, abortions in pregnant women and collapse when taken by mouth. Croton seeds are especially unsafe for pregnant or breast-feeding women. (N)

Confessions of a Hunter

By Andy Anderson



When nothing seems to go right...

You ever have a day when nothing goes your way? It just seems like you can't do anything right, and just when you think you're making progress, something happens that just knocks you back down?

We have gotten a lot of rain lately, probably the wettest winter I can remember in a long time. Everywhere I went was standing water, a swamp or marsh that just never dried up. Some places were deceiving, dry and dusty dirt on top, but pure mud underneath.

I was driving my pick up out to go deer hunting one mid-December morning. I got out into the ranch about seven or eight miles from the nearest good road when I felt that all too familiar sensation of the truck sliding in the mud and the rear end sinking down. This is where it all started going downhill.

In my efforts to get the truck unstuck, I fell in the mud and lost a boot. As I sat in the mud trying to dig my boot out, I felt water begin to saturate my clothes. It was cold outside and the water was cold as well. The chains and come-a-long, covered in mud and hard to grasp or handle, made things even more difficult.

I tried to call for help, but of course no cell phone signal. I was on my own and now my phone was covered in mud. On my own I kept at it, inch by inch I hoisted my truck forward. After about three hours of work, soaking wet and covered in mud, I had gained only about 60 yards progress and



Andy Anderson recently had a day where nothing went his way, including getting his truck stuck in the mud while in the middle of nowhere. However, he realized at the end of the day the mud washed off and the day could have always been a lot worse. (Courtesy photo)

no better position to drive back out or forward. I reset for a new pull, tying onto a good size post oak tree. Suddenly the truck hit some dry ground, like a speed bump. After attempting to drive it forward over the ridge, I tried to winch it up a little more.

With no warning at all, the post oak tree just slowly started falling over towards the pick-up. Like watching a wreck in slow motion, the tree fell down, coming to rest just in front of the truck, blocking all hopes of forward progress. Watching that happen was the most helpless feeling. There was

just nothing that could be done to stop it. With no chainsaw, I now had to start working back the way I came.

After nearly eight hours of winching and working in the mud, soaking wet and cold, I finally freed the pickup from the grasp of the earth. I got everything loaded up, covered in mud, wet and cold, I decided to just strip down, throw my clothes in the bed of the truck and head home. I got to the front gate and just stared at it, knowing that I had to get out in my underwear to open and close it.

I convince myself that I was

out in the country, and no one ever comes down this road. It will be okay. I got out, popped the lock of the gate and heard the distinct sound of a vehicle approaching. In a hurry to open the gate and get back to the truck I tripped up, fell in the gravel road and rolled as the gate flew open.

As I came to a stop, the gate hit its limit and came back at me. Before I could get my hands up to defend myself, wham! Right in the head.

Then my heart sank as I heard a voice call out, "Are you okay?" I looked up to see a well pumper


stopped in the drive looking at me, trying to keep from laughing. Embarrassed, I got myself up, my pride hurt more than my body. I thanked him for my concern as another truck cruised by slowly, staring at me as I stood in the drive, in my underwear, covered in mud. I can only imagine the thoughts going through their minds.

I explained the situation and series of events to the gentleman who was so kind to stop and check on me as he erupted into laughter. He offered to close the gate so I could get on my way.

As I headed home down the road reflecting on what I had just been through, I started laughing at myself. After all, what else could you do, and what else could possibly happen, right?

On the highway just a mile from home my heart sank as I saw the red and blue lights in my rearview mirror. I said to myself, "Dang it. Why me Lord? What did I do to deserve this?" I pulled

over and waited to explain myself. Texas' finest, a state trooper, approached the truck and began to explain I was pulled over for a dirty license plate. I started laughing as he realized my current predicament. I told the trooper that license plate wasn't the only thing that was dirty as his look of confusion began to change to a refrained expression of laughter. A very compassionate and amused Trooper gave me a warning and sent me on my way.

I got home, jumped in the shower and warmed up. By this time, it was late in the evening, and I was exhausted. I sat in my living room thinking about the day I just had and realized that despite it all, the mud washed off and what I thought was a horrible day could have been a lot worse. In the end, we all have bad days. Sometimes we get covered in mud, but it all washes off and we get another day to try again. I now have an electric winch. 

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