

NORTH TEXAS FARM & RANCH

INTER

February 2020 | www.ntfronline.com | Volume 8 Issue 4

BREAKAWAY ROPER

Amber Crawford

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ON THE COVER

Pictured on the cover is breakaway roper Amber Crawford. Amber's accomplishments include 2019 American Qualifier, 2018 United Professional Rodeo Association Breakaway Champion, 2019 Reserve UPRA Breakaway Champion, 2018 World's Richest Champion Breakaway Roper and much more. This Springtown, Texas, cowgirl is an inspiration both on and off the saddle as someone who is not afraid to set goals and push herself to the best of her abilities. (Photo by Dani Blackburn)



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letter from the editor

Hello readers and welcome

to the February 2020 issue of North Texas Farm and Ranch magazine.

This issue marks the one year anniversary of my time with NTFR, and I want to thank the readers again for this opportunity. I truly believe

"Do what you love, and you will never work a day in your life." I enjoy sharing the stories of the agriculture community in the northern part of the Lone Star State. I have been blessed to meet many amazing souls, and every drive home after an interview I find myself pondering how fortunate I am to have crossed paths with such great people. Here's to many more.

As for the rest of the world, the holidays are well over and we hunker down awaiting higher temperatures that come with the spring months, but until then, here is to hoping the month of love brings a bit of warmth to the cold winter air. Cold or warm, there are farmers and ranchers across the nation braving the elements to take care of their herds and land, and it is thanks to them that romantic dinner for two, the red roses and deliciously sweet chocolates are available for you to give to those you love the most.

For this month's profile, we bring you Amber Crawford, who found her love of breakaway roping and is helping others find their love for the sport as well. As mentioned above, she is one I left feeling grateful to have met. She is an inspiration to all as she strives to always work hard and never settle for less than her best, and I hope you enjoy learning more about her as much as I did.

Meanwhile, Rayford Pullen has a positive outlook for the industry in 2020 and Ag Elsewhere is looking beautiful in Colorado and Montana. Also in this issue, Phillip Kitts provides a recap of the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo and those who walked away with the glory after 10 exciting rounds of competition and Krista Lucas recaps the Texas Circuit Finals. In Outdoors, Tony Dean continues his series on Old World Bluestems, and Norman Winter knows the Pantone color of the year can be quite the inspiration for gardeners.

Visit our website at www.NTFRonline.com where you can subscribe to an online edition. To subscribe by mail call 940-872-5922 and make sure to like our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram and Twitter. Wishing you all the best this February.

Dani Blackburn

Dani Blackburn, Editor
editor@ntfronline.com



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Native Texan bareback rider Jake Brown put together all the ingredients for a round winning ride in the second to last night of the National Finals Rodeo. <http://ntfronline.com/.../cleveland-texas-cowboy-claims-his-.../>



PRCA ProRodeo photo by James Phifer

TWITTER FEED



NTFR Magazine @NTFRMagazine · Dec 9

Three rounds, three Texans win and in three different events. ntfronline.com/2019/12/nfr-re...



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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.
8. 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.
9. NTFR reserves the right to edit or reject any letters.
10. 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

Hopes High for the New Year

By Rayford Pullen | rcpullen@yahoo.com

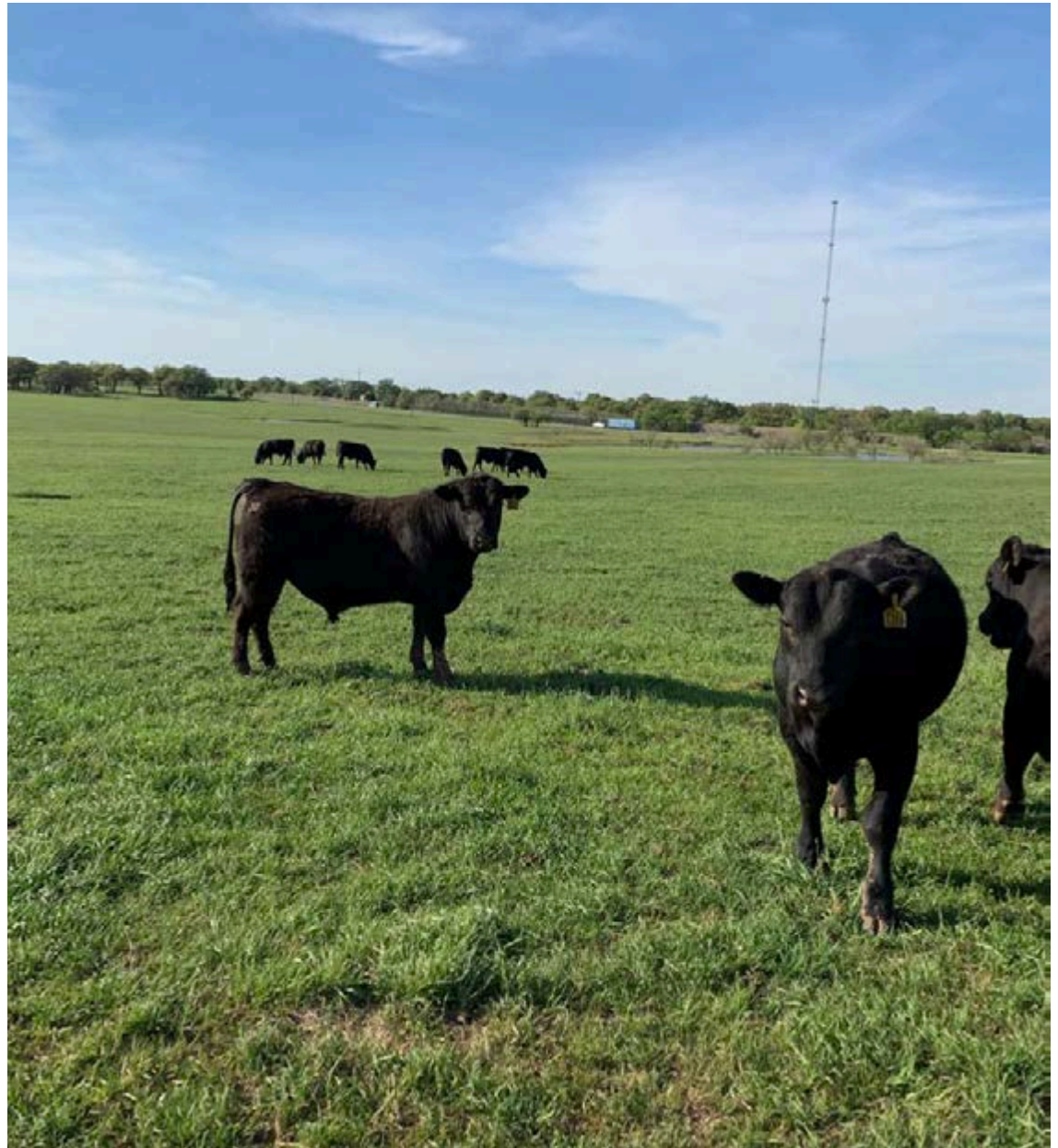
I have high expectations for the cattle business in 2020 and am making plans to somehow take advantage of the opportunities as they are presented.

Watching the cattle market in 2019, I saw six weight and eight weight calves bringing about the same price per pound, which meant if you wanted more dollars for your calves, you had to get them bigger but in an economical fashion.

With spring hopefully just around the corner, we all need to be in position to capitalize on our forages with the anticipated cheap gains regarding the calves we have on hand.

My optimism stems from several current events going on around the world with China and a phone call from my nephew, the cattleman/accrued financial advisor, that cattle prices will improve a lot in 2020. China lost half of their major source of protein, pork, due to African Swine Fever. We'll see what a catastrophe such as this does to our own agricultural exports.

Many years ago, our then Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butts, was asked if we would be able to feed the world's expected population of so many billions by the year, let's say 2020, and his was response, "Most definitely or they won't be here." This pretty well sums up what's going on now with regards to trade and tariffs the major countries are consumed with, and at the end of the day, people having something nutritional to eat is the first priority of any country, and high protein meat is the number one source. It appears our national administra-



Rayford Pullen has high expectations for the cattle business in 2020. (Photo courtesy Rayford Pullen)

tion has been trying to level the playing field regarding trade and trade deficits with other countries since they, the other countries, have imposed tariffs on our agriculture exports to keep their own

producers solvent.

Now that their producers cannot meet their needs, they need our or other country's imports to feed their own or they won't be there.

Back to cattle.

I really get to longing for spring this time of year as the feed bills mount and the hay supplies dwindle. Winter started about six weeks early for us due to the extremely early hard freeze we

experienced, which means our winter feed cost will be 50 percent higher, or more, than normal, since we normally feed about 100 days. Around our place, it has been harder to maintain the body condition we normally have since we lost the last six weeks of green grass we normally have and with that, and the cattle lost the extra condition they would normally put on prior to the first freeze.

This has resulted in us having to feed more to make sure they stay healthy enough to do what is expected, whether that is to nurse that fall born calf or calve in good enough body condition to breed back. Now is not the time to cut back on winter supplementation, so let's hope this market continues to improve so our bottom line is not nearly as bleak as it was in 2019.

As spring calving, during the middle of winter, continues, keep in mind a good mineral is so very important now for the cow as well as the calf. When I get to hearing folks are having cows retain

placentas for several days after calving, more times than not it can be traced back to a lack of mineral in my opinion. The literature I read over the years also tends to report later breed back for these same cattle, if memory serves me.

We also keep a good supply of powered colostrum on hand this time of year and if we witness a calf getting off to a slow start the first few hours after it is born, usually with heifers when it's cold and wet, we'll take an esophageal feeder and put it directly into its gut and make sure the calf's body temperature is high enough to be able to nurse its mamma.

This may mean drying it off with towels, putting it in a warming hut or the floor board of the pickup. We believe this will buy the calf 24 hours of good nutrition and up its body temperature and very seldom have to give a second dose.

So, let's get ready for better times and recognize opportunities when presented. It's a great time to be in the cattle business.®

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PHOTO BY LINDSEY LAMBERT

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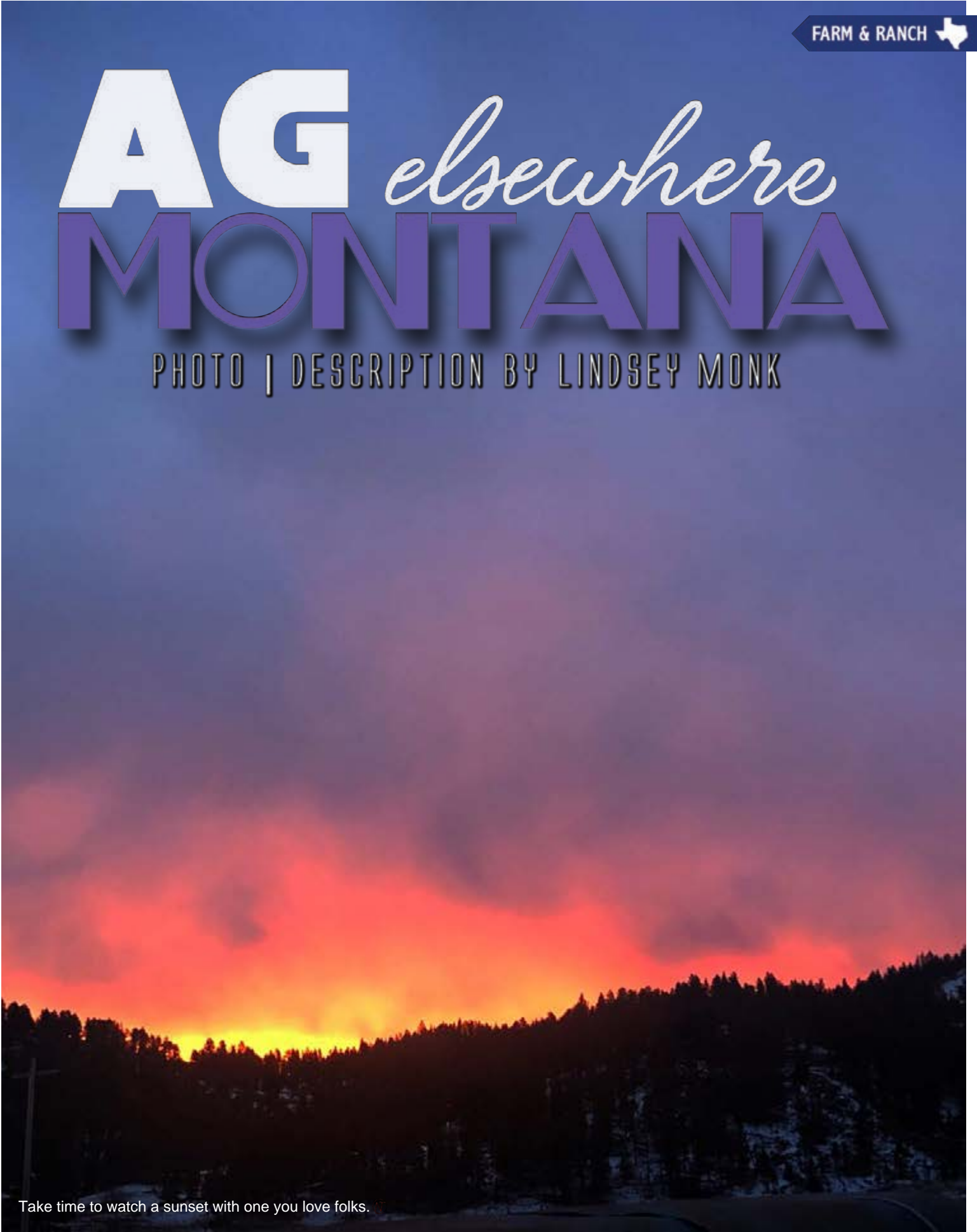


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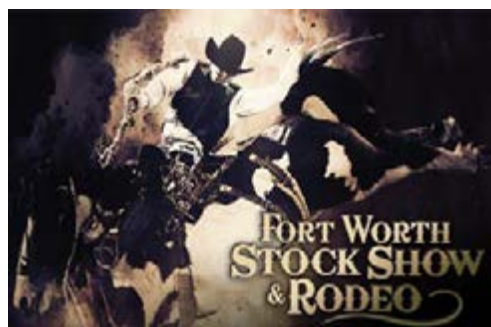
Take time to watch a sunset with one you love folks.

RANCH, RODEO and Randomness

By Pepper Stewart

2020 Rodeo Staycation Destination Short List

Rodeo fans of all ages, looking for that perfect getaway, but not too far? You'd be surprised how much you can see without leaving the state of Texas. No matter where you call home in Texas, you are just an hour or two from your next annual rodeo destination. When taking the family, your best deals are the stock show and rodeo combinations. Spend the weekend or spend the week, here are few spots to mark on your calendar.



1. Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo
Ft. Worth, Texas
January 17 - Feb. 8, 2020
www.fwssr.com



2. San Angelo Stock Show & Rodeo
San Angelo, Texas
January 30 - Feb. 16, 2020
www.sanangelorodeo.com



3. Professional Bull Riders Global Cup
Arlington, Texas
Feb. 15-16, 2020
www.pbr.com



4. San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo
San Antonio, Texas
Feb 6 - 23, 2020
www.sarodeo.com



5. Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo
Houston, Texas
March 3 - 22, 2020
www.rodeohouston.com



6. RFDTV The American
Arlington, Texas
March 7 - 8, 2020
www.americanrodeo.com



7. Rodeo Austin & Livestock Show
Austin, Texas
March 14 - 28, 2020
www.RodeoAustin.com



8. State Fair of Texas
Dallas, Texas
September 25 - Oct. 18, 2020
www.Bigtex.com



9. Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo
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This short list should give anyone an idea or two while marking up your new 2020 wall calendars.📅

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LAND MARKET REPORT

2019 SUMMARY OF RURAL LAND SALES

Congratulations. We all survived another rotation around the sun. If you are like me, it seems like 2019 just got started, but here we are in 2020 already. Growing up in the '70s, I was sure I would be driving a flying car by now or that we would all be speaking Russian due to the Cold War, but here I am with my Dodge pickup and still a free, red-blooded American.

The land market in North Central Texas is finally beginning to balance out after a five-year run of having too little inventory available to buyers. The data in this report indicates a steady increase in price and an overall increase in the number of transactions over 2018.

The number of out-of-state buyers, primarily those who are emigrating from other states to Texas as a permanent resident, is incredible. We are still one of the most popular regions in the United States of America for people to move to and also for people to invest in land. The climate, economy, ease of transportation and job opportunities that are available in our area are some of the key factors in people moving to the area. The growth has been in place for decades now, and shows no signs of slowing down, only increasing annually.

If you purchased land in 2019, make sure you have filed your 1-d-1 open space "ag" exemption, as well as any other exemptions that may pertain to you such as over 65, homestead, disabled veteran, etc.

In closing, I want to thank you for reading this report each month and hope you have found it informative. I look forward to what 2020 has in store for all of us, and wish you a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year.

2019 SUMMARY OF LAND SALES IN NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

YEAR	COUNTY	# SALES	AVG SIZE	AVG \$ ACRE	DOM	LIST/SELL
2019	MONTAGUE	49	74.975	\$4,718.66	167	91.86%
2018	MONTAGUE	48	102.483	\$4,451.60	149	89.61%

6% INCREASE IN PRICE PER ACRE. 26.84% DECREASE IN TRACT SIZE. 12.08% INCREASE IN MARKET TIME. (DOM). IMPROVEMENT ON LIST PRICE TO SELL PRICE RATIO.

2019	COOKE	72	57.332	\$8,433.27	167	97.19%
2018	COOKE	58	58.658	\$7,864.57	184	95.14%

7.23% INCREASE IN PRICE PER ACRE. 2.26% DECREASE IN TRACT SIZE. 9.24% DECREASE IN MARKET TIME. (DOM). IMPROVEMENT ON LIST PRICE TO SELL PRICE RATIO.

2019	WISE	87	33.674	\$11,398.05	147	92.66%
2018	WISE	69	51.995	\$8,564.53	145	92.6%

16.47% INCREASE IN PRICE PER ACRE. 36.5% INCREASE IN TRACT SIZE. 18.93% DECREASE IN MARKET TIME. (DOM) SLIGHT DECREASE IN LIST PRICE TO SELL PRICE RATIO.

2019	DENTON	40	53.138	\$23,570.87	190	86.9%
2018	DENTON	40	52.063	\$22,980.02	208	90%

2.57% INCREASE IN PRICE PER ACRE. 2.06% INCREASE IN TRACT SIZE. 8.65% DECREASE IN MARKET TIME. (DOM). DECREASE IN LIST PRICE TO SELL PRICE RATIO.



Johne's Disease in Cattle

By Barry Whitworth, DVM / Area Food/Animal Quality and Health Specialist for Eastern Oklahoma

In 1895, Dr. F. Harnes was presented with a cow that exhibited symptoms of weight loss and diarrhea. He initially diagnosed tuberculosis (TB), but when the cow was tested for TB, the tuberculin test was negative. Upon the death of the cow, he sent some tissue samples to the pathology unit at the veterinary school in Dresden, Germany. Dr. Heindrick A. Johne and Dr. Langdon Frothingham examined the samples. The small intestine was thickened, and the lymph nodes were enlarged. These lesions were considered to be tuberculosis type lesions.

The two scientists performed another TB test which again was negative. The two-scientist proposed another mycobacterium was causing the disease. Today the disease is known as Johne's disease, and the bacterium is classified as *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies paratuberculosis, commonly referred to as MAP.

MAP is a very hardy microorganism in the environment. MAP is resistant to heat, cold, moisture, and drying. The bacterium has been found to survive for several months in the soil and water. The organism can be found in grasses fertilized with contaminated manure.

Johne's disease, which is pronounced "yoh-nees," is a gastrointestinal disease of ruminants that is fatal. Producers should be aware that Johne's is a herd disease. This means if one animal is found ill with MAP, then several more of the normal appearing animals are probably also infected with the organism.

Most animals are infected with the disease early in life, but the clinical symptoms of the disease do not appear for many months. The organism is contagious. The bacterium can be transferred animal to animal within a species, such as cow to cow, or from one ruminant to another ruminant, such as cattle to sheep. Non-ruminant species (dogs, pigs, raccoons, coyotes, etc.) also can be infected with MAP, but they usually do not have any clinical signs. In the United States, it is estimated 91 percent of the dairy herds and 7.9 percent of beef herds are infected with Johne's.

Cattle are usually infected with MAP at an early age. The organism can be found in fecal material, milk or colostrum of infected cows. Calves may ingest the organism by nursing fecal contaminated teats or by nursing milk or colostrum infected with MAP.

They also may ingest the organism by eating feed, grass or drinking water that is contaminated with MAP. One other way calves may be infected is in the uterus of infected adults. Adults are not as easily infected with the organism but still can be infected with MAP by ingesting contaminated feed, grass, or water.

The length of time between being infected with MAP and the appearance of clinical signs is variable. Cows may become sick in as little as two years, or it may be several years before clinical signs appear. The speed at which the animal shows clinical signs depends on how many organisms were ingested initially.

If the calf ate a large number of bacteria,

then it will be more likely to show clinical signs sooner than if a small number were ingested initially. Not only does the number of ingested bacteria play a role in the disease, but scientists have found a genetic connection. Some cows are more resistant to infection than others. Even so, all breeds of cattle are susceptible to MAP.

The two most common clinical signs seen in cattle with Johne's disease are diarrhea and weight loss. MAP infects the last portion of the small intestines and its lymph nodes. With the thickening of the intestinal wall, nutrients cannot be absorbed, which results in malabsorption diarrhea.

When an animal cannot absorb nutrients, it will break down its body to supply the nutrients needed to survive. Most cattle will have good appetites but continue to lose weight. The cows will become weak and emaciated.

Another clinical sign that some cows display is submandibular edema or "bottle jaw." Bottle jaw is caused by low serum protein levels. Protein is important to maintain vessel structure in the body. As serum protein values drop, fluid begins to leak out from the vessels.

All mycobacteria microorganisms are difficult to treat. For example, to cure human tuberculosis it requires multiple antibiotics given for long periods of time. Studies in cattle indicate similar results. Improvement was seen when antibiotics were given; however, once treatment was discontinued, the cattle would

relapse.

The drugs needed to treat Johne's disease are not currently approved for cattle. If the drugs were approved, the cost would make treatment economically not feasible.

The best way to keep Johne's out the herd is prevention. Producers must work to prevent positive cattle from entering the herd. Replacement bulls and cows should be purchased from Johne's free herds or test all new introduction.

If the disease is present in a herd, the focus should be on manure management, culling infected cattle and keeping facilities clean. Anywhere calves may be born should be clean. Disinfectants that are labeled as "tuberculocidal" may be used for cleaning surfaces such as feed troughs or water troughs.

However, organic material may inactivate the disinfectant, so all fecal material should be removed before applying the disinfectant. If the calving area is heavily contaminated with manure, cattle need to be moved to cleaner pastures. This type of practice has been used in Nebraska and is called the Sandhills Calving System (<https://beef.unl.edu/beefreports/symp-2007-17-xx.shtml>). Also, adult cattle need to



Courtesy photo

be tested and positive cows need to be culled. Following these practices will decrease the incidence of the Johne's disease in the herd.

One final thought on Johne's: Crohn's disease in humans is very similar to Johne's disease. Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel disease with no known cause or cure. MAP has been found associated with human patients with Crohn's disease and some other human diseases. Some scientists believe MAP does cause disease, and some do not.

Both sides of the argument have studies to back up their stance on the subject. More research will be required to end the debate.

If producers would like more information about Johne's disease, they should contact their local veterinarian or visit the Johne's Information Center (<https://johnes.org>).

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Collins (Dec. 1, 2018). *The story of Johne's disease for non-experts*. Retrieved from <http://johnes.org>.

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Lameness Examination in the Horse

By Garrett Metcalf, DVM

Lameness is one of the most common problems that occur in the horse and that owners will have to address. Many owners have experienced lameness and the examination process, but there are various ways to approach the lameness examination procedure. There also are new advanced diagnostic tools to help identify the limb or limbs that are causing the lameness and allow objective quantification of improvement when the region of the limb in question is isolated to the source of pain.

Basic Lameness Evaluation

Veterinarians commonly have to rely on the owner, trainer or the rider's information and history about the horse to help narrow down the cause of the lameness. Therefore, an accurate history about the horses' age, career, level of work, previous treatments, abnormal things the horse is doing under saddle, or refusing to do, while working are all important information that is gathered before the exam begins. This information can be the key to understanding or honing in on the cause of the lameness. In some cases, the cause of poor performance, refusing to work as hard, or refusing certain tasks can be unrelated to a musculoskeletal injury.

Physical examination of the horse is generally a good starting point before the horse is put through the lameness examination. Palpation of the limbs, ligaments, tendons and joints can give clues to potential problem areas that can be leading to a horses' lameness issues. Palpation of the neck, back and sacral regions can give clues if the horse is muscle sore, back sore and/or has old injuries that can lead to soundness issues. Hoof testers are an important part to a complete physical examination



(Courtesy photo)

because of the propensity of forelimb lameness to arise from the feet. Lastly, visual examination for conformation, shoeing or trimming methods and comparison of musculoskeletal symmetry of the horse are all part of a complete examination.

The initial lameness examination is typically completed while trotting the horse in hand in a doctor preferred pattern over a hard or firm surface to evaluate the horses' movement. This portion of the exam is typically referred to as a baseline evaluation before flexions are performed. A grading system is used that was set by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) to have a standardized method to grade degrees of lameness.

The system is a 0-5 scale and has a defined criterion that the horse has to meet in order to be selected for a grade. Then specific areas of the limbs are isolated and stressed by performing flexion tests. This is a technique to induce

temporary stress on the joint(s) to discern if pain is arising from that particular joint(s) or area of the limb and the degree of response to the flexion is noted. Some veterinarians grade the response numerically or by a verbal descriptor scale, for example, mild, moderate or severe.

More difficult or less obvious lameness cases require putting the horse under different circumstances to exacerbate the lameness. Other circumstances the horse can be put under to achieve this are lunging the horse, riding the horse under saddle or having a rider perform the specific gait or movements that the horse is exhibiting lameness under or poor performance.

Diagnostic Nerve and Joint Blocks

Just because a limb has been found to be the source of lameness doesn't mean much unless the specific cause can be diagnosed. Diagnostic nerve blocks are used routinely in equine lameness

exams to further narrow down the area since horses can't tell us where the pain is coming from. Therefore, after blocking the horse one zone at a time the horse will show improvement once the site the pain is arising from is blocked out.

Diagnostic blocks can be performed by injecting local anesthetic drugs perineural (adjacent to specific nerves) to block pain sensation or sterilely into a joint to desensitize the joint. Once the anesthetic drug is injected around the nerves or into the joint it only takes minutes to block the pain sensation from that region allowing repeat examination of the horse to see if the source of lameness has been identified.

Lameness Locator

Lameness has long been a subjective measure of a horses' gait that can have its pitfalls. If you want to test this theory, just try to get a group of people to agree on where a horse is lame, **Continued on page 24**



Continued from page 23

and you will quickly find out it is difficult to get everyone to be on the same page. Luckily there are ways now to objectively quantify a horse's gait/lameness with a system developed by veterinarians and engineers to give real data about how a horse moves. The system can pick out which leg is lame and also indicate if there is an improvement in the lameness after diagnostic anesthesia is performed. This can be all done simply with a tablet in the veterinarians hand and inertia sensors placed on the horse. The sensors collect the information as the horse is being trotted in hand or with a rider on the horse. The information is sent wirelessly to the tablet and the software calculates and grafts the information in real time.


Diagnostic Imaging

Once the source of pain is localized by examination and diagnostic blocks, the region in question will require diagnostic imaging to determine what is causing the pain. Several diagnostic modalities are available in the equine industry. A very common tool in almost every equine practice is digital X-ray. Digital X-ray allows much higher quality imaging and much more rapid image capturing compared to film.

Ultrasound is generally used to diagnose soft tissue injuries, especially ligament and tendon structures but can also be used to image joints if injury is suspected. MRI is a superior diagnostic tool that can be used to image soft tissue and bone lesions that are isolated to the lower limb of the horse. Bone scan is often reserved for difficult to isolate lameness cases or in cases an injury has occurred to the vertebral column such as back or pelvic injuries.

Grade degree of lameness (on 5)

- 0 Lameness not perceptible under any circumstances
- 1 Lameness is difficult to observe and is not consistently apparent, regardless of circumstances
- 2 Lameness is difficult to observe at a walk or when trotting in a straight line, but consistently apparent under certain circumstances
- 3 Lameness is consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances
- 4 Lameness is obvious at a walk
- 5 Lameness produces minimal weight bearing in motion and/or at rest of a complete inability to move

There are many challenges to identifying a horse's lameness but with greater understanding of anatomy, use of diagnostic nerve blocks and advance imaging tools available to veterinarians, lameness can be tamed more than ever before. Treatment options for lameness causing issues also are becoming more advanced and more targeted to specific issues, which have greater outcomes and better results to get horses back to work again. 

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The Wrangler National Finals Rodeo 2019 World Champions. (Photo by Steve Gray)

Wrangler National Finals Rodeo Left its Mark on the World

By Phillip Kitts | Photos courtesy PRCA

The 2019 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo has come and gone, but it has left its mark on the world.

In what has become a cult following for many rodeo and non-rodeo fans, the 35th year in Las Vegas brought in huge attendance numbers. In the Thomas and Mack alone, the estimated attendance number to all 10 performances topped 168,000 people. If you were to count the thousands of people who make their way to Las Vegas for the festivities and choose to attend watch parties instead of the actual event, the number of people converging

on the city would most likely top a quarter of a million people.

It is not just rodeo that draws droves of fans to Sin City for WNFR. With tons of other activities like the Freestyle Bullfights, futurity events, barrel racing and the Youth World Championships, there is plenty for a person to do around the city. Then there is what may be the biggest draw for many and that is the shopping. Several venues around Vegas are invaded by thousands of retailers who make their winter rush to sell as much as they can. Cowboy Christmas alone drew

more than 186,000 people during the 10 days. This number only accounts for one venue, so one can just imagine the numbers if you add up all the venues.

The real highlight of the 10 days is purely and simply rodeo. From Oct. 1, 2018 to Sept. 30, 2019, rodeo athletes from all over the nation take on one focus. That singular mission is to get to as many rodeos as feasible and win as much money as possible. The qualification process for the WNFR is simple: the top 15 in each event with the most money won qualify for Vegas.



The average athlete doesn't put much focus on Vegas during most of the year. Generally there is too much to pay attention to between getting their next run or ride in, then reloading the rig and getting to the next one. As the year winds down and September comes, the focus changes. The competitors who are sitting in the top 10 or 12 generally are comfortable with their ticket being punched to attend finals. Of course, all of that depends on the actual money won and where their closest competitor sits in total winnings.

As the end of September rolls around, there will be the list of those considered on the bubble; these athletes are either on the right or wrong side of the top 15 but within striking distance to make a run at qualifying. The bubble competitors always make huge pushes at the end of the year in order to get their shot at winning the big money in Vegas.

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At just 20-years-old, Stetson Wright became the first cowboy to win the all-around as a rookie and the first to do so from the rough stock end of the arena since Ty Murray. (Photo by Clay Guardipee)

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In 2019 the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo paid out more than \$10 million in winnings; this alone explains what makes it such a big ordeal. The list of athletes who made the stage to pick up their WNFR back number was a who's who in rodeo. With several multi-time national champions mixed with a lot of WNFR rookies, from the start the conditions were set for a wild ride.

Over 10 rounds each competitor made 10 runs or rides. Each night they had their shot at hefty pay checks that paid all the way into the sixth-place winner. During the 10 days there were several competitors who made somewhat surprising strides in their level of competition.

In bareback, and one of the top stories out of WNFR, was Clayton Biglow from Clements, Calif. During the 10 days of rodeo he won numerous rounds and collected more than \$243,891 worth of earnings over the 10 performances. By the end of the event Biglow had settled into the number one spot in the World and taken home his first World Champion buckle. He also laid claim to the Ram Top Gun award, which is awarded to the top money winner from the WNFR.

In steer wrestling, Ty Erickson rolled into Las Vegas with a legitimate shot at a title. His finals started out a little slow with him not collecting his first check until round four when he tied Cameron Morman for second and third. He made his next strong showing in round seven, tying with two others for third, fourth and fifth. In round nine he put together his best run of the finals, which gave him the round win. With this win and the money he had accumulated throughout the season, he was locked into his first world title.

In team roping and on the header side it was a return champion who took home his second gold buckle. Clay Smith of Bowie,



Bull rider Sage Steele Kimzey grabbed his sixth-straight world title. (Photo by Dan Hubbell)



The 2019 all-around champion Stetson Wright competing on Dec. 14. (Photo by James Phifer)

Texas, collected his second gold buckle. Smith also made his mark by finishing second in the chase for the world title in the All-Around. On the heeling side, Wesley Thorpe from Stephenville, Texas, used his strong 2019 season to claim his first World Championship buckle.

Saddle bronc riding saw a return customer to the podium. Zeke Thurston from Big Valley, Alberta, Canada, put on a bronc riding clinic, winning three rounds on his way to his second World Title in the event. His three round wins placed him in the sixth position in the total money won.

The tie down event may have been the closest race of WNFR. Shane Hanchey from Sulphur, La., put on a tremendous showing during the finals, winning two rounds and placing in most of the others. Marty Yates of Stephenville, Texas, also had a big final, winning two rounds and showing in several others.

In the end it was Haven Meged from Miles City, Mt., who used consistency and determination and a strong fifth place showing during round 10 to win his first world title.

Barrel racing kicked off with what looked to be an interesting development. Emily Miller from Weatherford, Okla., blasted on the scene in round one and repeated her round winning way again in round four.

Her round four win had placed her on top of the World Standings as well as top of the Top Gun standings. Dona Kay Rule was not going to go quietly as she stepped to the top in round two and again in round five; however, her two round wins would not have much influence on the title race.

In the end it came to a repeat champion in Hailey Kinsel Lockwood, who put together back-to-back round wins in rounds seven and eight, which would secure her second consecutive gold buckle.

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Hailey Kinsel Lockwood put together back to back wins in rounds seven and eight to secure her second consecutive gold buckle. (Photo by Steve Gray)



Emily Miller in the round five grand entry at the WNFR. (Photo by Steve Gray)



Emily Miller blasted on the scene in round one and repeated her round winning again in round four. (Photo by James Phifer)



Zeke Thurston won three rounds on his way to his second world title in saddle bronc riding. (Photo by Dan Hubbell)



A stellar performance from Boudreaux Campbell catapulted him to number two in the world standings. (Photo by James Phifer)



One of the top stories out of the WNFR was bareback rider Clayton Biglow, who took home his first world champion buckle and laid claim to the Ram Top Gun award. (Photo by Dan Hubbell)



Continued from page 28

This was the first back to back World Champion in barrel racing in 15 years.

Bull riding saw the record setting ways of Sage Steele Kimzey continue but also saw a stellar performance from Boudreaux Campbell, which catapulted him to number two in the world standings and a respectable number three finish in the Ram Top Gun race.

Regardless of how great Boudreaux competed, it was overshadowed by Kimzey and his sixth straight world title. On his way to his six-peat, Kimzey won rounds seven and eight and finished respectably in most of the rounds.

What might have been the biggest story of the WNFR came in the all-around race. Going into the finals, Stetson Wright of Milford, Utah, who in 2019 competed in both saddle bronc and bull riding, held a slim lead in the all-around.

He had qualified for WNFR in bull riding but failed to qualify in saddle bronc.

His closest competitor was team roping header Clay Smith, who also had only qualified in one event. Wright, who was a rookie, took control of the situation and used his single qualification to the max.

He went on to win two rounds and keep his slim lead intact all the way through round 10. In the end, at 20 years old, Wright would be the first cowboy to win the all-around as a rookie and the first to do so from the rough stock end of the arena since Ty Murray.

With the end of the 2019 rodeo season there is time for the dust to settle before things get hot again. Most all the cowboys and cowgirls of the PRCA headed home to enjoy the holidays with the family, but the break was not long. In January the Denver Stock Show and Rodeo was the first big stop for their campaign towards the 2020 National Finals Rodeo.®



Marty Yates had a big finals, winning two rounds and showing in several others. (Photo by Dan Hubbell)



Tie-down roper Shane Hanchey. (Photo by James Phifer)

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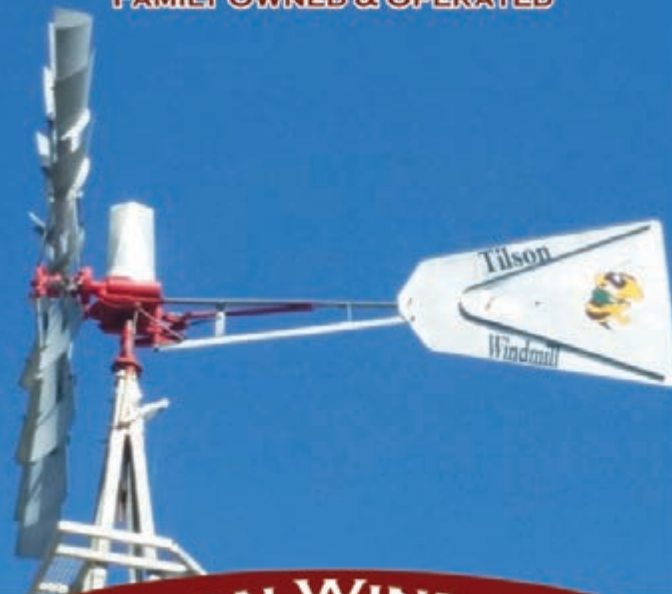
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The Best in Texas

By Krista Lucas

Professional rodeo cowboys and cowgirls do not get much down time between the end of one rodeo season and the start of a new one. For the Texas rodeo circuit, there is a short turnaround from the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in December and the Ram Texas Circuit Finals Rodeo.

The Texas circuit hosts many of the top rodeo competitors in the country and January 2-4 the top 12 cowboys and cowgirls in each rodeo event competed at the Extraco Events Center in Waco, Texas. A contestant must enter a minimum of 15 rodeos within their circuit to be eligible to qualify for the circuit finals.

There are 12 regions divided up across the country, and every Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association and Women's Professional Rodeo Association member must designate his or her home circuit at the beginning of the rodeo season, in hopes of winning the year-end standings or finals average title to move on to compete at the Ram National Circuit Finals Rodeo.

In the bareback riding, WNFR qualifier Jake Brown won the year-end championship and the TCFR average after placing in every round. Brown pocketed a total of \$23,884 for the circuit year, and since he won both the year-end and average, Bill Tutor will join him at the RNCFR as the reserve champion.

Steer wrestler Matt Reeves had a lucrative circuit finals, winning the year-end title and nearly \$7,000. The 2019 WNFR qualifier won the first round one, split the win in the third round and claimed the average title. This was Reeves' second circuit championship, and Clayton Hass will represent Texas as the reserve champion.

Team ropers Luke Brown, Ross Ashford, Garrett Chick, and Paul Eaves will get to make the trip to the RNCFR. Brown placed in two rounds and in the average to be the year-end champion header.

Ashford roped with header Colby Lovell and placed in every round and won the average to be the year-end heeler.

2015-world champion saddle bronc rider, Jacobs Crawley, won more than \$5,000 to extend his lead as the year-end champion. He also is a back-to-back circuit champion, and his brother, Sterling, qualified for the RNCFR with the reserve championship.



Barrel Racer Jimmie Smith of Mcdade, Texas is the Texas circuit champion with her horse, LenaOnTheRocks. (Photo courtesy Jimmie Smith)

Newcomer John Douch had a successful rookie trip to the TCFR. The Huntsville, Texas calf roper won the average and more than \$3,000 for the weekend. Veteran WNFR calf roper Marty Yates was the year-end champion. Yates placed second in the second round and fourth in the average.

In the barrel racing, Jimmie Smith was crowned the year-end champion. After her good horse got hurt last year in July, it is safe to say the duo is back in action and ready for the 2020 season. Jill Wilson of Snyder, Texas pocketed over \$3,000 to win the average title. North Texas was well represented at the finals as well with Taylor Langdon of Aubrey, Texas winning the third round and \$2,055 on her horse Dashin Louie.

Bull riders Jeff Askey and JT Moore will represent Texas as the champions headed to

the RNCFR. Askey rode two bulls and won \$3,083, while Moore may not have had the finals he wanted, but he walked away as the reserve champion and \$23,189.76 for the year.

Brothers-in-law Trevor Brazile and Tuf Cooper had a great weekend in Waco in the steer-roping event. Both Brazile and Cooper won a little money in the rounds, and Brazile won the average with a time of 36.1 seconds on three head. Cooper will join him at the RNCFR as the reserve champion. Cooper also finished the year as the all-around champion.

After an exciting weekend in Waco, cowboys and cowgirls head off to other winter rodeos like Odessa, Denver, Rapid City, and Fort Worth. Also coming up in February and March, many contestants will compete in San Antonio and Houston, before heading off to the RNCFR held in Kissimmee, Fla., April 3-4. ®



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Intermission from daily life

It's not easy to take a vacation when you're a rancher. There are many things to be done to assure smooth sailing for both your cattle and those overseeing the ranch while you're away. My husband will put out round bales if there is not enough grass to graze and create a schedule for when to move our cattle to a different pasture. Then there's getting the grass mowed where needed, and it's always nice to come home to a clean house.

Despite the extra prep work required, I am convinced it's important to have an intermission from your daily responsibilities. Everyone deserves to slow down and have some time away from his or her own hustle and bustle. A rigorous routine, that is undoubtedly true for any rancher or farmer, can leave little time for adventure and fun, and that, my friends, are two things this city girl needs in her life.

Fortunately, my country boy knows this and is happy to partake in such pleasures with me.

We recently returned from an amazing trip to Scotland last spring.

We toured castles and viewed the countryside by train and coach. The stunning glens and luscious lochs were captivating.

We were especially excited to see highland cattle and cheviot sheep grazing the hillsides. Just like our springtime back home, mammas and their babies were everywhere. Adorable twin lambs were in delightful abundance.

It was not uncommon to see

ageless stone fences dividing pastures that have often belonged to the same families for centuries.

Life in the highlands felt calmer and quieter than our Texas ranch life. There seemed little else other than their beautiful land to occupy their mind and feed their soul. There is definitely something desirable about the all-encompassing peace I felt while in Scotland, but many towns did have enticing shops and charming cafes to spend time in, too. I even found the perfect moment to get my hair styled at a beauty salon. Yes, I think I could adjust to life in Scotland pretty well should my Texan ever want to move there.

Yet, it was good to be back home to our ranch and our sweet cows were so happy to see us they gifted us with two healthy calves the day we returned. We just needed the rain to stop long enough for us to get our first cutting of hay accomplished.

Life goes on and our normal begins again, but it was invigorating to go on our Scottish retreat.

I highly recommend finding your own way to gift yourself a recess from your daily endeavors. Of course, not all breaks and breathing spells require crossing an ocean.

Even if only for an afternoon or a weekend getaway, giving yourself a time-out can clarify perspective and revive, refresh and rejuvenate and lead you to new inspiration and goals and the strength and insight to reach them. This recipe is good for both city and country folks.®



Annette and her husband, John, stand in front of a Scotland castle.



Annette and her husband, John, in front of a Scotland train. (Photos courtesy Annette Bridges)

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JESSES JEWELZ

By Jesse Kader

What says Happy Valentines better than some burgundy bells? These are so amazingly comfortable and stretchy, you are sure to wear these often. They are a great color to wear year round and can be paired with sweaters, cardigans or tank tops and dusters in the summer! These are also tall girl approved. Check them out now as well as the cardigan at www.jessesjewelz.com.

Photo credit : Susana Clare
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Lacey's Pantry

By Lacey Newlin

Valentine's Crack

Servings: 30

Total Time: 13 minutes

Ingredients

- 50 saltine crackers
- 1 cup butter cut into chunks to melt down, 2 sticks
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 2 cups white chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup pink chocolate melts
- Valentine's sprinkles

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Line a large cookie tray with aluminum foil. Spray with cooking spray. Line saltines up neatly in rows.
2. In a medium sized pot melt your butter and brown sugar. Once butter is melted down, bring to a boil. Continue to stir the entire time and

boil for about 2 minutes. It will look bubbly and look like caramel.

3. Pour over the top of the saltines. Gently spread across the saltines.

4. Place in oven and bake for about 7 minutes.

5. While in the oven melt your pink chocolate melts according to package directions.

6. Remove the pan from the oven and then sprinkle your white chocolate chips over the saltines. Your hot toffee mixture will melt the chips. You can put it back in the oven for a minute to move the process along. Once your chips are melting, spread across the top evenly with a spatula.

7. Mix your pink chocolate into the white chocolate by pouring it over the top in a decorative way. You can use a knife tip to help combine colors to your liking. Quickly decorate with sprinkles, the melted chocolate will act as your glue.

8. Once chocolate is completely hardened you are ready to serve.®



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BREAKAWAY ROPER

Amber Crawford

A 5'1" cowgirl backs her horse into the box and gives the nod for the calf in the chute next to her to be released. Her name is Amber Crawford, the event is the American, and just one year ago, she and her fellow competitors were watching from the sidelines.

The American in Arlington, Texas, is one of numerous rodeos to have added this fast paced, action-packed event to their lineup. Opportunities are on the rise for those in breakaway roping, including the Daddy of 'Em All in Cheyenne, Wyo., the Pendleton Round-up in Oregon and the Days of 47 Rodeo in Salt Lake City, Utah. Not only are the events making room for female competitors, but the payouts also are on the rise.

"It has grown so much. Just five years ago I would flat out say I worked full time hours so I could rope. Now it is crazy because it is becoming where I can almost do the opposite; that is how much it has grown and the opportunities, if we promote them and do right by what people and rodeo committees are offering us, are going to keep growing," Amber said.

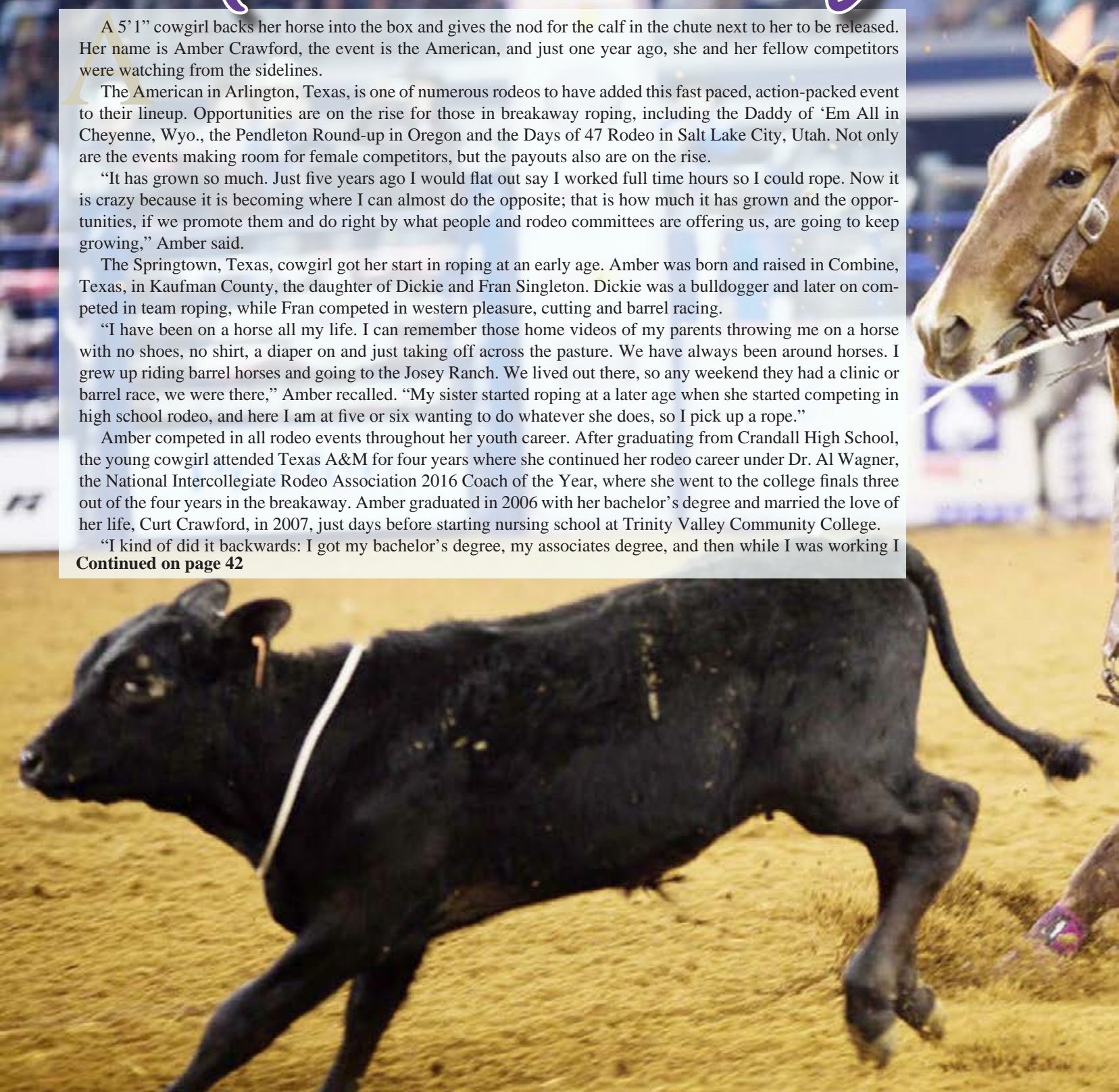
The Springtown, Texas, cowgirl got her start in roping at an early age. Amber was born and raised in Combine, Texas, in Kaufman County, the daughter of Dickie and Fran Singleton. Dickie was a bulldogger and later on competed in team roping, while Fran competed in western pleasure, cutting and barrel racing.

"I have been on a horse all my life. I can remember those home videos of my parents throwing me on a horse with no shoes, no shirt, a diaper on and just taking off across the pasture. We have always been around horses. I grew up riding barrel horses and going to the Josey Ranch. We lived out there, so any weekend they had a clinic or barrel race, we were there," Amber recalled. "My sister started roping at a later age when she started competing in high school rodeo, and here I am at five or six wanting to do whatever she does, so I pick up a rope."

Amber competed in all rodeo events throughout her youth career. After graduating from Crandall High School, the young cowgirl attended Texas A&M for four years where she continued her rodeo career under Dr. Al Wagner, the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association 2016 Coach of the Year, where she went to the college finals three out of the four years in the breakaway. Amber graduated in 2006 with her bachelor's degree and married the love of her life, Curt Crawford, in 2007, just days before starting nursing school at Trinity Valley Community College.

"I kind of did it backwards: I got my bachelor's degree, my associates degree, and then while I was working I

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Amber Crawford ropes at the American. (Photo courtesy MDG Rodeo Photography)



BREAKAWAY ROPER

*Amber Crawford***Continued from page 40**

got my bachelor's degree again and as of right now I am two classes away from getting my master's in nursing administration," Amber explained.

The Crawfords began their life together in Terrell, Texas, and she went to work at Children's Health in Dallas, where she worked from 2010 to 2016. After the couple moved to Springtown in 2014, the long drive to Dallas got to be a bit much. She made the switch to Cook Children's in Fort Worth due to its closer proximity two years after their move, where she still works as a triage nurse in the emergency room part time.

"It is definitely not easy. You meet people and you help people in a time where they are freaked out because their kids are sick or something is wrong and they had an accident, but what I love is you also have those little spurts where you actually get to talk to people. They don't happen very often, especially in the winter when it is so busy, but they do happen," Amber said.

However, while the nurse's goal was once to have an upper management job in the career of nursing, her goals have shifted as opportunities continue to evolve for breakaway ropers.

"My goals have changed because the opportunities to rope are changing so much," Amber said. "It's like I am roping with girls who are 15 to 20 years old, and there is a time when you are too old to do this kind of stuff. I feel like nursing is always there and working even part time is still hard to balance."

The Horses

Despite working a job that is demanding both physically and mentally, Amber still finds time to compete in more than 70 rodeos while putting the work in at home as well as in the arena. After working 12-hour shifts, there's no time for rest; instead she saddles up a horse. The majority of the time that horse is Caddy, a horse that wasn't originally meant for her, but for her husband.

She put roping on the back burner during nursing school, only riding cutters thanks to her father-in-law, who raises and trains cutting horses. When Amber graduated from nursing school, she decided it was time to rope again and purchased a grey four-year-old, Diva, to



Amber and her husband, Curt. (Photo courtesy Ashleigh Martin Photography)

train. The pair had just gotten started working together and not even a week later, the mare suffered a severe cut to her leg. Diva was able to come back, and retired in 2016.

Disaster struck again just a week after Diva's injury. Curt's horse, Dually, broke his shoulder and had to be put down. Not long after the first two incidents, Amber's good cutting mare also cut her leg, and despite fighting to heal the cut, developed an infection and she had to be put down, too. However, Amber was able to rope on Scrunchy, a roan out of her cutting mare. Amber began roping on her as a five-year-old, retiring her in 2017.

"I didn't want to cut anymore because it is too expensive. Cutting is a great event, it is fun, it is an adrenaline rush, but it is so expensive, and it is judged. I want to be the bearer of my own fate, and I had brought my cutting mare home to rope on her," Amber said.

Despite the unfortunate events, it led to the purchase of a two-year-old sorrel by the name of Caddy, who was ready to work from the time he stepped on the Crawford ranch. The very first day, Curt was already swinging a rope on him.

"They say it happens in threes, and it did. The grey got hurt and we really didn't know if she was going to come back. He lost his good horse, we lost my good cutter and I think she

could have easily been a rope horse. She was older, but losing her helped me get him, which granted, he was not for me; we didn't even buy him for me, but it worked out," Amber said.

At just three years old, Curt began hauling Caddy as a heel horse and still does from time to time, but around the age of seven or eight, Amber began breakaway roping on him and the pair became the perfect team. When Scrunchy suffered an injury in the summer of 2017, Curt gave Caddy to Amber to compete on, and he has been her main horse ever since. Caddy is a horse that gives 110 percent to whoever is riding him and giving him that effort back is important to Amber.

"It is crazy what a horse does, not just for your mind-set, but for your ability. I feel like he has bumped up my ability so much just because he is so different. Not to say either of my other two weren't outstanding, and if I could have those three, I would have it set. He would be great for any kind of setup. My roan was great for setups where she could be super quick and stop really hard and make everything happen really fast. My grey was one of those that would just score all day long; it didn't matter what you asked her to do. You just held on. But things happen for a reason, and it has made me start on some young horses and find

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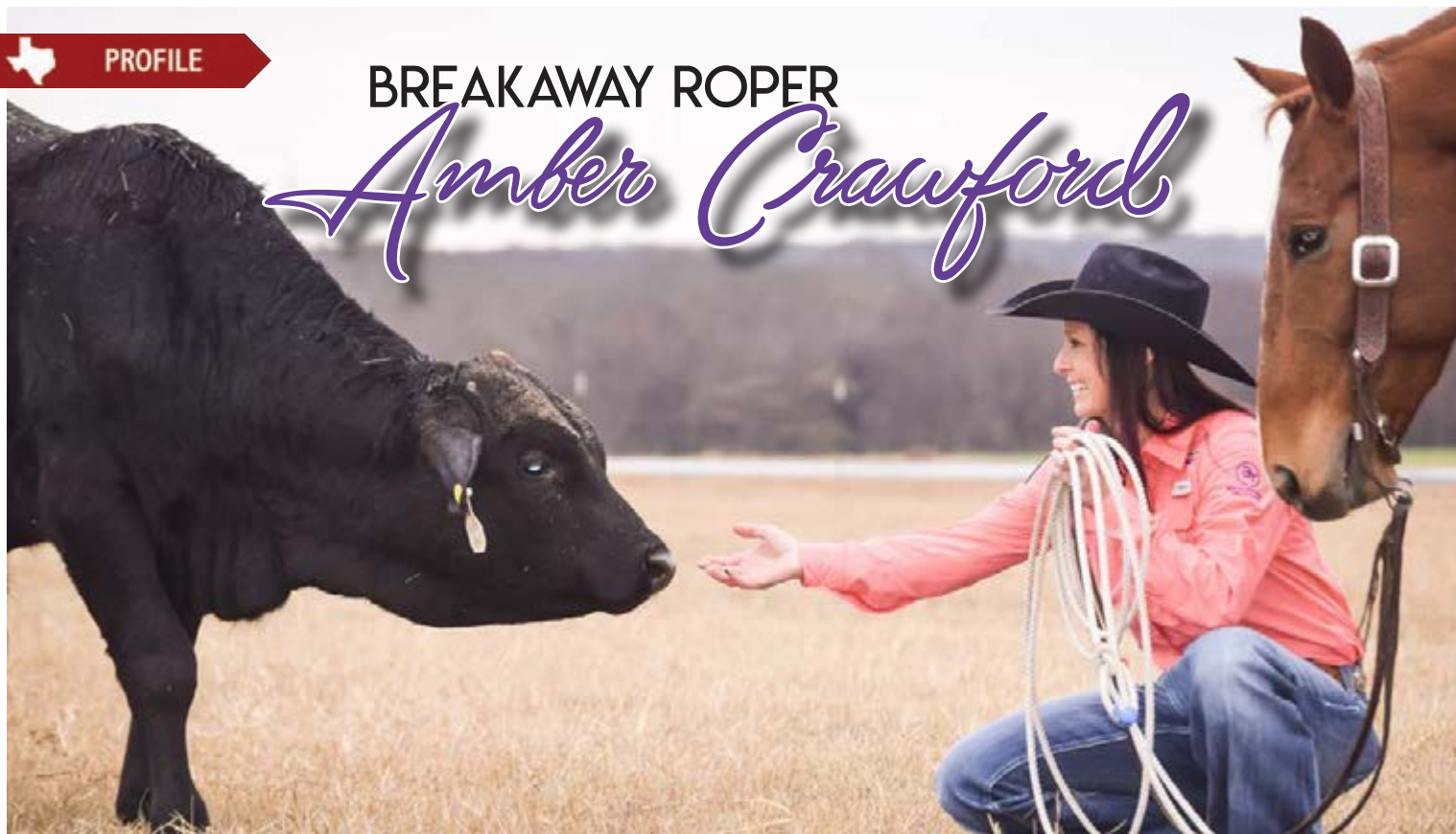
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BREAKAWAY ROPER

Amber Crawford

The calf that got away from Amber at the American now sits in her pasture, where she is working on making him her friend. (Photo by Dani Blackburn)

Continued from page 42

some new young horses,” Amber pondered.

Making her own horses, verses buying a finished one, might be a little more difficult, but is an aspect of her roping that has always been important.

“It’s crazy because my mom and dad believed in buying the nice barrel horses but making the rope horses. We always had to make the goat tying horses and rope horses. We didn’t go off and buy the finished rope horse, which is so different from what people do these days. Now they want to buy the finished rope horse, they don’t want to buy the young horse. I didn’t ever get that gene. I still want to buy the young ones and try to make my own rope horse, and that becomes a little more difficult,” Amber said.

Rodeos and Winnings

Now that Amber has dialed back her work hours to focus on roping, she is able to dedicate more time to the sport she loves so dearly. The sport of breakaway roping involves one roper, one

horse and one calf. The cowgirl begins by backing her horse into the roping box, which includes a rope barrier across the front, connected to a breakaway collar on the calf, which is inside the chute next to her. The cowgirl nods for the calf, and must stay in the box until the calf has reached a certain distance, releasing the spring-rope barrier. If the rider breaks the barrier, 10 seconds is added to her time, which can be detrimental for a rider.

“With breakaway roping, I am in control. I have me and my horse, and that’s why I don’t team rope either because to me team roping is like okay, I have someone else’s horse, someone else, they have all their factors, then I have all my factors. With breakaway roping it is me, my horse and the calf. That’s it. I am in control and if I mess up, then it is my fault. There are not many times my horse messes up: it is normally my horse messes up because I mess up, not the other way around. I can control my own fate. The only thing I have is the

calf. That is the only thing that can mess me up,” Amber said.

In a sport where the outcome is determined in literally a matter of seconds, muscle memory becomes vital in competition.

“Your mind shuts off, and I have a calf that is either going to cooperate or not cooperate, depending on what they feel like that day. That is why I say it is so important that muscle memory is there so whenever you do back in the box, whenever your mind shuts off, you can rely on that muscle memory,” Amber explained. “A basketball player has four quarters to go, ‘Okay, we can do this, we can do that, we can change this, we can work on this and we can do that.’ But in breakaway roping, competition wise, you rely on that muscle memory and that practicing. If it doesn’t work out, you just have to shut that down and go to the next one, or you go back to the practice pen and the drawing board. You just worry about the next one.”

Amber’s wins are numerous and include 2019 American Quali-

fier, 2018 United Professional Rodeo Association Breakaway Champion, 2019 Reserve UPRA Breakaway Champion, 2017 Seth Broeche Memorial Champion Breakaway Roper, 2017 Gordie “Bubblegum” Moore Champion Breakaway Roper and the 2015 Western Horseman Invitational Roping Champion. However, the 2018 World’s Richest Champion Breakaway Roper holds a special place in her heart.

“Last year I set a bunch of goals for myself. I told my husband I wanted to improve my roping, my catch percentage and I wanted to win these things. One of the ones I had on my bucket list was the World’s Richest in Montana, and 2018 was the first time it lined up I was going to be off work. I made sure I didn’t miss it, and I ended up winning that roping. It was a shock, the first year I came up there and it was 200 something girls and two head and the short round. I am not going to say average ropings aren’t my thing, because I can do it, but sometimes I struggle, and up there it is like



walking fresh pasture cows that weigh 300 to 500 pounds. They aren't like calves. They don't know people, they don't know horses, they don't know anything. It was fun, you score them out, you go rope and it was absolutely gorgeous up there," Amber recalled.

Another goal accomplished was winning the UPRA and making it to the semifinals in the American.

"It wasn't my goal until I got to Fort Worth, and then I was like 'Okay, I can do this. I know I can.' I had two spots in the first round, two in the second round, I bought back a spot and then the semifinals and the top 16," Amber said. "Seven calves and I didn't miss a calf and that is something, not that I struggled because that should be easy, but just to have that mindset. It was such a crazy week and it was so exciting you can easily lose your focus there, so I tried to make sure I stayed focused and I roped outstanding all weekend."

In a spout of bad luck, she drew a black calf that decided to step left. When Amber roped him, the calf stopped and jumped all the way back up to the left corner before she was able to get her rope around his neck.

"Where I probably should have been a long two, which would have put me into the top eight, I was a 3.8. I had people come up to me and say, 'I have never seen how focused you were all week and how well you roped all week. There is no doubt in my mind if you hadn't drawn the calf you did in the top 16 you would have been the one,'" Amber recalled. "Just to have people voice that makes me realize I can do this. So now the calf sits out in my pasture and weighs close to 500 pounds."

It is a small example of Amber's willingness to face her failures and learn from them. Those who follow her on social media know she isn't afraid to talk about the tougher moments, the failed attempts and what she needs to



(Left) Amber with her horse at her home in Springtown. (Photo by Dani Blackburn)

work on to better herself.

"I have not always been like that, but a really good friend told me it is like a marathon: it doesn't ever stop, you just keep going. You can't just put your foot on the gas pedal, you have to put your foot on the gas pedal and not let up. Rodeo doesn't stop, you have to always think about your next move and not be mad about what happened two weeks ago," Crawford said. "Just like at the American, I could have been mad, I could have been angry, but I was grateful just to have the opportunity and I won a lot of money that week. I can't complain about anything or take that for granted. I had no reason to complain, I roped every single calf I threw my rope

at, and you have to be thankful for those things that two years ago we weren't getting to do. It has to be fun. You have to go and do it, turn it off and let that muscle memory work."

Not only are there new opportunities every day for cowgirls to compete in breakaway roping, but the payouts for those competitions also are on the rise.

"If you looked at my roan mare, I won \$40,000 on her in five years. I have won that in almost a year on my other horse. That shows you how much it has changed in three years. I don't think what people realize is to get that \$40,000, that was hauling hard and all over, now I wouldn't have to do that. That's not bragging, it is just putting a

number value on it and there is plenty of stuff I don't go to, I have condensed it down so that my husband and I can both go to stuff," Amber explained.

The Future

Breakaway adds a bit of excitement for fans to witness another event at rodeos, but it also is providing another event for women to compete in, and cowgirls are taking notice.

"The opportunity has always been there, but it did quiet down and the roping really dropped off, but it never went away. Now you are just giving the opportunity for younger girls to see they don't have to just run barrels, they can rope. You're also seeing the girls who left roping and thought the barrel racing was a little easier because you can go to all these different things, now you are seeing it turn the other way and they are saying 'Maybe I can go back to roping.' Which is such a great thing. The sport is building itself to become such a great opportunity for everyone who wanted to pick up a rope. It gives women another opportunity to show we can rope, too. We don't have to do just one thing, it gives us the chance to do both," Amber said.

Ultimately, the dream for breakaway ropers would be for the sport to one day be added to the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, because like any rodeo competitor, it is hard not to imagine being on the world's biggest stage.

"Who knows with the fact if it does get put into the PRCA and gives us the opportunity to do that. It would be awesome. What kid, no matter how old you are, if they are involved in rodeo doesn't think they want to rope there? They have made it this big huge goal of so many kids. A 20-year-old kid just won the world in calf roping in the average. Is that not that kid living his dream? So yes, ultimately that is the goal, but if it

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BREAKAWAY ROPER

*Amber Crawford***Continued from page 45**

doesn't happen you can't be disappointed with that either," Amber said. "It would be so cool just to feel what all those people do and it be in an event that hasn't ever been there before, but you can't count out what the American is doing, or what the WRCA is doing or any of these associations that have already stepped up and added it and given us the opportunity to win these crazy sums of money."

Needless to say, Amber is excited about what the future holds.

"It is hard to set goals when so many things are changing. They added breakaway at Fort Worth, not just the Invitational, but they added it to the rodeo. You think of those things and I think one of the biggest goals I want to set for myself comes back to the average ropings. I want to change my mentality. My new goal isn't to go out and win this or that, but to improve on myself and my average roping to a number I feel sufficient," Amber said.

Amber, with the help of Curt, set her goal at 75 percent of her average ropings she would like to make it back to the short round or catch every calf.

"I think that allows me to not single out one thing. In 2018 I was seriously focused on one thing: my focus was on winning the UPRA," Amber recalled. "I think changing that goal and changing that vision opens up so many doors because it allows me to make myself better and not just focus on that one thing and everything else just fall into place. Because almost everything you look at is an average roping now; it's getting to that point."

Amber also is focused on getting her young horse going, a talented and capable horse who is a bit fragile-minded and has trouble in the box. Amber knows if breakaway roping continues to grow, she is going to need backup for Caddy.

"I'm not going to lie, in Vegas I missed one at the All In for first. I flat out missed him and there was not an excuse in the world of why. Granted, my horse was not 100 percent. I rode him on Saturday at the Rope for the Crown. I did not perform very well; he did fine," Amber said.

On Sunday, Caddy came up lame with an abscess that busted out Monday. The Craw-



A group of ropers take time out of a clinic conducted by Amber Crawford to smile for the camera. (Courtesy photo)

fords chose not to ride him on Monday, but decided it was time by Tuesday.

"My husband was like 'Look, you're riding him. It is busted, it is probably a little painful, but we know the reason he was hurting; give him some meds. It is two seconds; he is strong enough for that.' I rode him that night and he wound up getting me back to the short round on Wednesday. It got me to thinking: he gave me 110 percent, what am I doing to make sure I give him the same? He needs backup. Am I giving 110 like him? My 110 percent is making sure he doesn't have to do it all, because that is not what he deserves. Yes, he would do it all, but he doesn't need to go rope in the mud and that kind of stuff; a young horse is good for that. That's my diligence to him. I feel like I have tried to work myself into those goals and make sure he is not the only one who is having to take the brunt of 100 rodeos," Amber explained.

Amber also has started conducting clinics and lessons. It all started when a friend called her up and asked her to go to south Texas and put on a clinic for 13 girls in his daughter's rodeo association, and Amber realized helping other ropers was something she was capable of doing.

"I had always wanted to, but again, it is all in the change in my mindset. I never thought I was good enough. I could barely figure out what I was doing, and I didn't know how I was going to help someone else," Crawford laughed. "It was fun, I was so tired, but I was like 'I can do


this.' I felt I stepped out of my box."

Amber, with the help of a friend in marketing, set up a website, email and social media. She conducted her second clinic at Salt Creek Ranch and Event Center in Boyd and has been providing lessons. She has been as far as Canada as she helps rides both younger and older improve their breakaway roping skills.

"I realized I really could do this. Not to say I can make a job of it, but just do what I can to help out. It is one of those things you see these people change and when the light bulb turns on, so to speak, you just kind of see those changes and their excitement. It is really nice," the roper said.

It is one more thing added to her already full plate, but Amber, full of energy and spunk, seems to not only embrace it, but love it.

"I feel like I am not anything special," Amber said. "My biggest thing is I try to work hard. It is getting off a 12-hour shift, going home and having two or three horses saddled to go out and rope at seven in the evening, or it is getting off at 3 a.m. and saddling two young horses to go rope even though the weather isn't that great. It is just knowing you can't give up. You have to put in the work whether you want to or not. It is not always going to be fun. Yeah, winning is fun, but sometimes you learn more when you lose, too."

To see what is in store next for Crawford or to inquire about her upcoming clinics, follow her on Facebook or visit www.ambercrawfordroping.com. 

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Grub Time

by LANG ©





Thank a Farmer on Valentine's Day

By Dani Blackburn

Valentine's Day is known for love and romance, but many don't realize the holiday has a dark past and ties to agriculture.

While historians are unable to pinpoint the exact origin of the holiday, there are two theories regarding its origin. One theory believes Valentine's Day dates back to ancient Rome and the holiday Lupercalia, celebrated each year from Feb. 13-15.

Each year the Roman men, usually after enjoying their fair share of alcohol, would sacrifice a dog and a goat, then whip women with the hides of the animals they had slain. Young women lined up to have their name put into a jar, from which the young men would draw a name.

Even more shocking is the fact these women were willing participants in the event, which was considered a fertility festival. They believed their participation in the festival would increase their likelihood to conceive. Lupercalia was believed to ward off evil spirits and purify the city, thus releasing health and fertility.

The annual celebration was conducted in honor of Lupa, a she-wolf who nursed and sheltered Romulus and Remus after they found themselves abandoned in the wild. Lupa cared for the youngsters in her cave, known as Lupercal, until the shepherd Faustulus came across the pair.

Agriculture also played a part in the annual festival. Each year, the Romans dedicated the festival to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture. Faunus, one of the oldest Roman deities, was the horned god of the forest, plains and fields. When he made cattle fertile, he was called Inuus. Lupercalia and its dedication to Faunus marked the start of the season to begin sowing seeds as the Romans



Agriculture continues to play a role in Valentine's Day. (Photo courtesy Metro Creative)

hoped for a fertile year of crops.

Eventually the Roman Empire turned to Christianity and the festival evolved into the feast of St. Valentine. The religious celebration honored the line of Christian saints under the name Valentinus. The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints by the name, all three of whom were martyred. One popular legend contends Valentine was a priest in third century Rome. The emperor at the time outlawed all marriages in order to keep his soldiers focused, but the priest continued to marry couples in secret. When this was discovered, Emperor Claudius II ordered his death. Some believe Saint Valentine may have been killed by helping Christians escape Roman prisons, where they were often tortured. Another legend claims Saint Valentine of Terni, a bishop, was the actual origin for Valentine's Day, also


killed by Claudius.

Saint Valentine remains a mystery as does the beginning of Valentine's Day. Some are convinced it is celebrated on the anniversary of Valentine's death, but many others believe it was placed in February by the Christian church in an effort to Christianize Lupercalia.

The festival was outlawed all together at the end of the fifth century when Pope Gelasius declared it St. Valentine's Day, but it was not yet associated with love. That came later during the Middle Ages. The English poet Geoffrey Chaucer first recorded St. Valentine's Day as a day of romance in "Parliament of Fowles," his 1375 poem. Greetings also became popular in the Middle Ages with the oldest known valentine written as a poem in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was in prison.

However, the practice of exchanging greetings with romantic partners did not reach American soil until around the start of the 1700s. Esther A. Howland was the first to begin mass-producing valentines in America in the 1840s, giving her the moniker "Mother of the Valentine." Today, an estimated 145 million cards are sent each year on Valentine's Day in the United States.

Agriculture continues to play a role in the romantic holiday. While its ties to the history of Valentine's Day might be somewhat of a stretch, no one can deny the importance of the industry to the romantic holiday.

Farmers and ranchers across the nation are responsible for the growing of those lovely roses, raising the cattle for that perfect steak dinner, and producing the ingredients for the sweet candy and chocolate-covered strawberries. 

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11 ACRES - VALLEY VIEW

Gorgeous 11-acres in the beautiful area between Lake Ray Roberts and Lone Oak Road. Offers a great home site overlooking a rolling pasture, trees, and a scenic 1-acre pond. Ag Exempt, Sandy loam soil.

Ottos Drive | \$385,000



38 ACRES - CROSS ROADS/AUBREY

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8400 Fishtrap Road | \$2,495,000



50 ACRES - PILOT POINT

Striking equestrian estate features a 4,500sf luxury home with pool, a 16-stall heated show barn, a 10-stall shed row barn with pipe runs, outdoor arena and a 50x70 storage bldg w/ 2 apartments.

9538 Wilson Road | \$2,250,000



10.7 ACRES - KRUM

Eye-catching property includes a nice 2,600SF 4BR home, inground pool, a detached 2nd garage, a 30x50 insulated workshop, 4-stall horse barn with pipe runs, riding arena and a large fenced pasture.

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22 ACRES - SANGER

This beautiful tract with elevation changes, expansive views and a stock pond is minutes from a boat launch and full-service marina on Lake Ray Roberts while being less than 3 miles from I-35. Ag Exempt.

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8.2 ACRES - PILOT POINT

With frontage on US Hwy 377, this choice property offers a custom home, guest house, a 10-stall barn and arena. Ideal for a multitude of uses with great visibility and directly in the path of growth.

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10 ACRES - AUBREY

Pretty tract of land has a good balance of pasture and trees in an ideal setting for developing into a single-family residence. Additional 10-acres available. Sandy loam soil, Ag Exempt.

Grubbs Road | \$387,000



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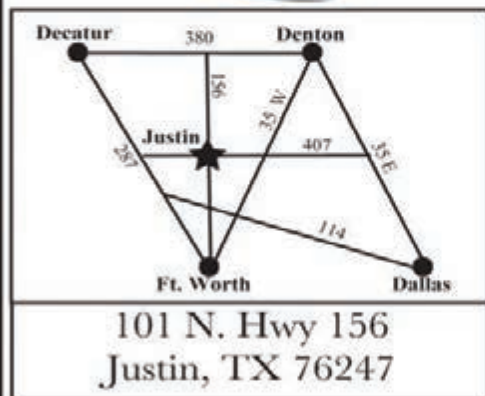
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On the Road

WITH DAVE ALEXANDER



Wade Hayes and Dave Alexander.



Wade Hayes. (Photos courtesy Dave Alexander)

Hey North Texas Music Fans. Probably the best part of my job is getting to meet some of the most talented performers on the planet and having the opportunity to share the gift of music with them.

This past December I had the honor of performing a Christmas show with Wade Hayes in Elk City, Okla. Somehow in our many years of road shows, tours and concerts, we had never had the chance to meet until this past Christmas.

Like many of our shows, we met, setup our gear and had a few minutes for a quick run through of the show. I quickly realized that this was going to be a great night of music.

Wade Hayes is the real deal: singer, songwriter and picker. He's not just your average guy in any of those categories. He's

also genuine. Raised in Oklahoma, he's been blessed with the gentleman gene.

In his early days Wade produced some great hits like 'Old Enough to Know Better,' 'I'm Still Dancing with You' and 'On a Good Night,' but in the past few years Wade has navigated a complicated journey in life that has produced some of his best work ever.

Wade is a two-time, stage IV cancer survivor. His perspective on life is quite unique.

My favorite song of Wade's is "Who Saved Who," a story of the day he found a stray dog that he rescued. Give it a listen, but you better have a tissue handy.

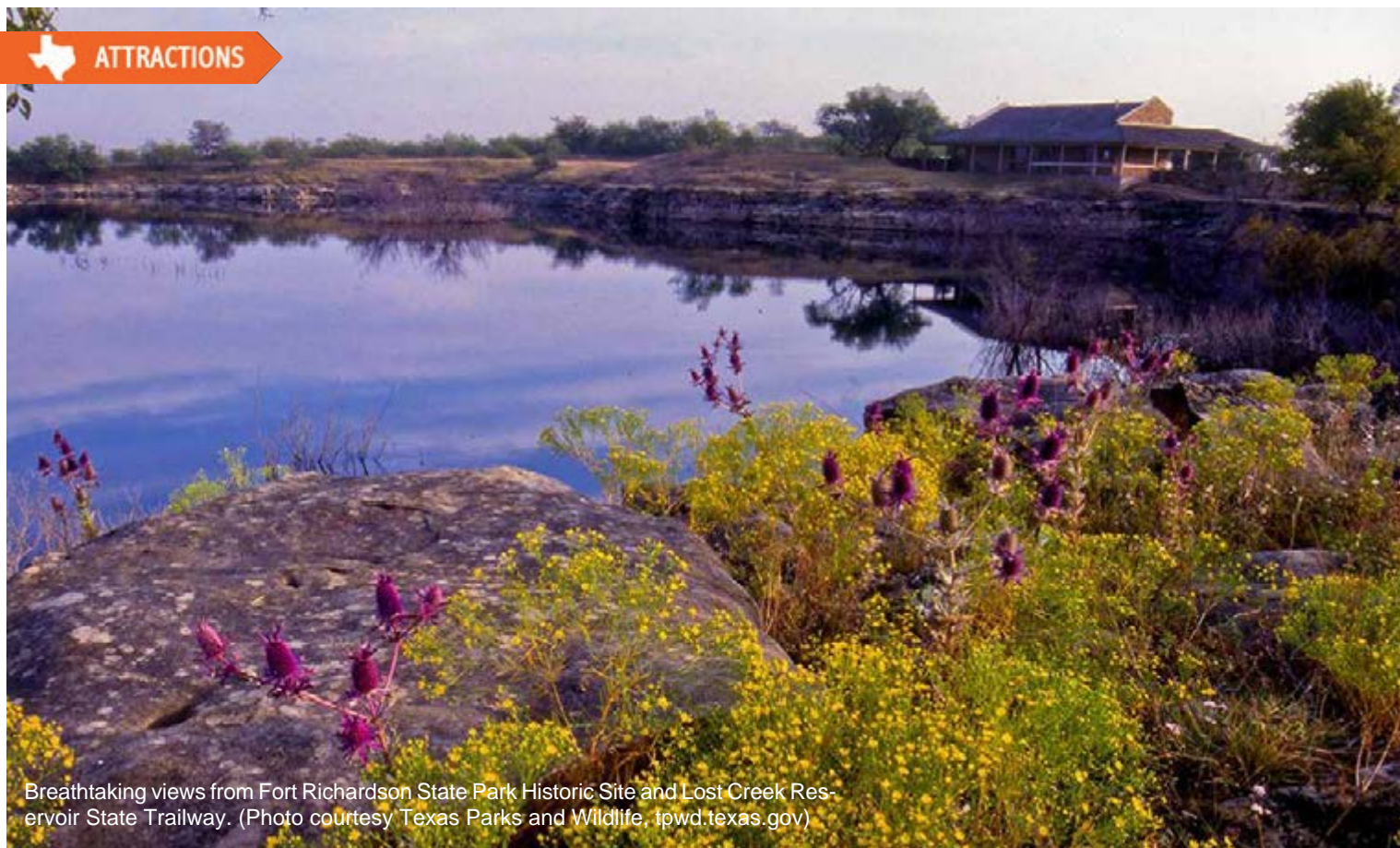
To learn more about this unique country star visit, www.wade-hayes.com.

I look forward to my next show with him. 

DAVE'S UPCOMING SHOWS

February 1
Gladewater, Texas
March 7
Gainesville, Texas
March 8
Garland, Texas

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 and Western Swing Show.
www.davealexander.com.**



Breathtaking views from Fort Richardson State Park Historic Site and Lost Creek Reservoir State Trailway. (Photo courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife, tpwd.texas.gov)

New Adventures Await in North Texas

By Mandi Dietz

By February, New Year's resolutions remain in full force. In addition to bettering one's quality of life, adding some wellness, wisdom and or adventure can be fun. Whether day-to-day or occasional, a little positive change could potentially make a big impact.

From increased exercise, travel, and time with family, to cultivating a hobby, taking a class or honing a skill, make resolutions enjoyable.

For example, instead of confining physical activity to a gym or indoors, walking, hiking, biking, and horseback riding help disguise exercise.

During the romantic month of February, explore a scenic nature trail, such as Fort Richardson State Park and Historic Site in Jacksboro, featuring several water sources, wildlife and breathtaking views; and Lake Mineral Wells State Park and Trailway with



Help create Valentine's flowers at Vetro Glassblowing Studio at Fine Art Gallery in Grapevine. (Photo courtesy www.vetroartglass.com/vetroevents/)

cabins and rock climbing, to name a few.

Each North Texas county offers a unique experience. Create a goal to visit any or all of them.

Learn the art of glass-blowing

in Grapevine at Vetro Studio and Fine Art Gallery. Either spectate or participate with a number of private and public event opportunities, including complimentary demonstrations, team building and


party packages.

With a companion, coworker, friend or family member, use "fuel, fire and hot molten glass," to create memories and Valentine flowers beginning Feb. 1 and Valentine hearts starting Feb. 8.

With regards to hobbies, pursue an existing interest or initiate something new.

Varying from person to person and depending on preference, try a painting class, join a book club, learn beekeeping, or target practice at a shooting range.

Often, local libraries and community education organizations offer much, such as writing workshops, genealogy groups, gardening and, excursions, either for free or for a reasonable fee.

A way to enhance the mundane and spur growth, New Year's resolutions aim to improve by living life to the fullest or at least a little bit more than before. 



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THE ROAD GOES ON Forever

BY JELLY COCANOUGH

Since it has been cold and sour outside, let's wander to a place of warmth and sweat. Flying ants and laughter enthralled by the joyous group of gentleman I was around.

As I excitedly counted down the days, it had finally arrived. We welcomed the chuckwagon crew,

The Ought Zero, to my family's land and they welcomed us with a place to feel at home in the middle of a constant wind storm. The light peaked through the giant canvas tent that housed the handsome green wagon with its delicately rubbed off pinstripe. Each inch of the wagon has a thousand stories

it could tell of the past cattlemen it has taken care of so graciously before us.

Each character that goes with the historic Springfield branded wagon has a special place. They always make you feel welcomed even if you have never been in that type of environment before. They are worn and cheerful, despite not having a bath after a couple of days. The smell of smoke is a prairie cologne. Tom Ford would call it Sourdough (starter) Smoke, because all you could smell was either of those two things.

The Outlaw Chef, aka the wagon boss/head cookie, aka Terry Chandler, greets each new comer as Quincy Wallace, the other humor filled chuckwagon veteran, aka Chief Hood, offers them a glass of the world renowned drink of Tang, the orange flavored official, but unofficial, drink of the cowboys. Terry is a

man that looks like the cowboy/surfer/ human version of Courage the Cowardly Lion whose laugh is so contagious, making you laugh just because something made him laugh. He is a man who keeps too many stickers on the back of his truck, as the lady at the gas station so delicately put it, while Quincy is the quirky fellow who is always posted up fixing things that go wrong. He often stands with his arms folded, giggling at the mishaps of others when the fire is too hot.

Fabian Alvarado, the person who I will steal to run my imaginary restaurant, is a mastermind when it comes to making things happen in the kitchen. Despite the circumstances, he made gourmet cowboy cuisine every breakfast, lunch and dinner. Quiet but never dull in a conversation. He, alongside the rest of the bunch, make meals which offer a unique din-

ing experience. Anything from sweet chocolate cake to an animal mounted on a crucifix.

As everyone messes with their tipis, I watched from my hammock that was swinging from a couple of overgrown mesquite trees. One of my favorite characters in any story, Richard Baggett, the beautifully skilled blacksmith, set up his most impressive “mansion” while we all stood in amazement. Decorated from head to toe with rugs and wall hangings, accompanied by gas lanterns and a bottle of Jack Daniels Corn Juice everyone would later pass around after each dinner.

Every day as I rolled out of bed around 9:30ish - breakfast begins at the crack of dawn and I’m a person that requires a lot of sleep, I wander up to camp and see all the crew singing and cooking to old country music as they laugh about the festivities that happened the night before.

Garren Still, our favorite leather Indian chief man/witty camp comedian, coughing because too much sourdough starter blew up in his face. Swatting flies and singing in his unofficial rodeo announcer voice, a smile gets put on your face when you see him. He is decorated with some of the prettiest jewelry and has a story to tell from each piece. A turquoise bracelet we all try to barter for and braids under a cool old hat with a beaded band. He is one of the kindest, most unique souls you will ever meet, along with every other person on The Ought Zero wagon.

Richard Baggett decided to cowboy up for this outing. He got chapped, a justice to the group-type initiation cowboys do when there is reason to celebrate or for discipline within the group since most cowboys live their life based on respect and etiquette, and sometimes just because we get tired of looking at each other. He also apparently got scalped by Garren but I wasn’t around to see that, just the dangling strand

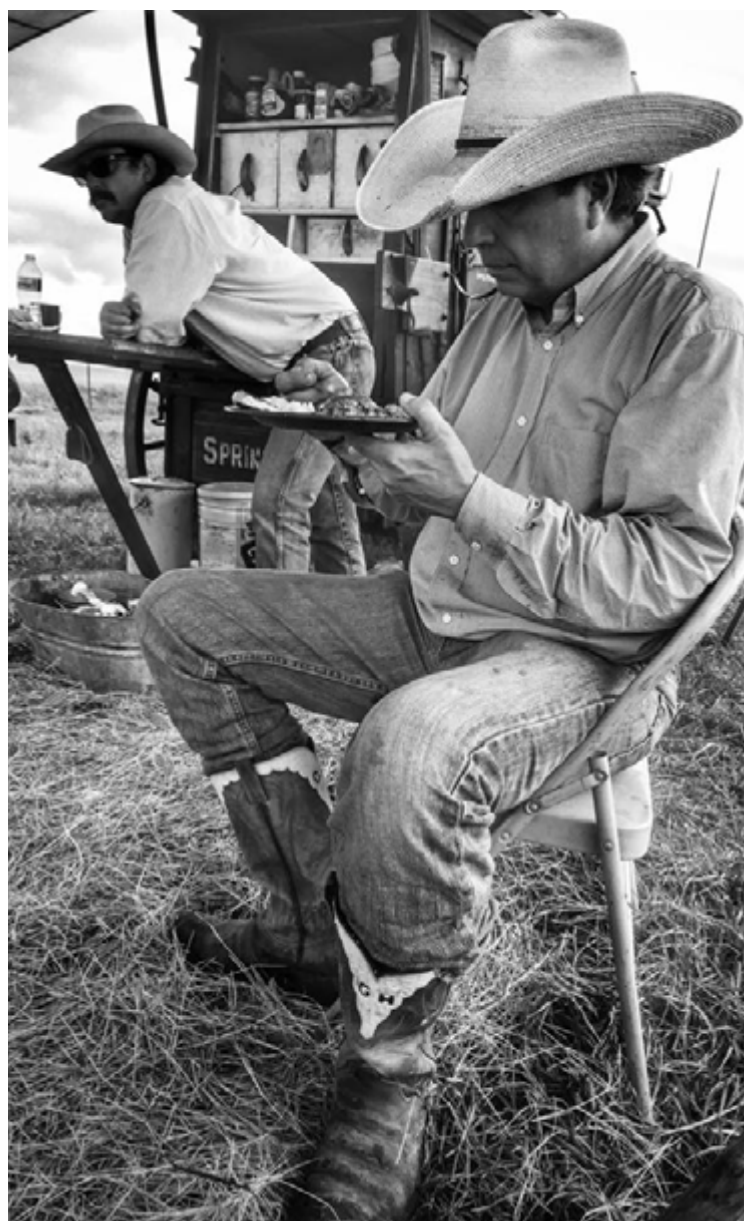
of hair that is incorporated into Garren’s knife that rests on his hip that leaves the evidence of that event.

As I leave my friends at the wagon and head towards our destination of the day, my dad and I pull up to a set of pens in his feed truck that has never heard of a thing called an air conditioner before. It’s filled with junk and I rest my feet on old empty boxes that once contained medicine.

The only radio station we listen to is a Mexican station that plays old cowboy songs. It takes me 20 minutes to crank down the window so everyone on horses can listen as they ride off to gather calves.

I sit with my back to a bunch of momma cows that will attack you if you’re vulnerable enough. We have all their babies in a holding pen while the boys take turns throwing and doctoring each one; a process that has been practiced since the days of our great ancestors hundreds of years ago. We wait for it to rain to break the hot air but it doesn’t keep the mean flying ants from swarming and biting us in the muggy Texas heat. Buttoning our clothes all the way up so the flies don’t get inside our shirts, we’re drenched in sweat so much it looks like we all went swimming in the nearest pond. In fact, sketchy Mexican buzzards are starting to surround us because they are sure we’re going to croak any minute.

After branding the bunch we’re with, we head back to camp for dinner. Tang, coffee and cobbler with every meal. The late night meal is always a celebration. Richard showing everyone how to throw tomahawks just in case there’s ever a reason to use them. There is a giant wooden block atop three legs with its back overlooking a covered up sunset with storms approaching, lightning dancing around the campsite, a tomahawk in place in the ground to signify the storm is cut in half to



part around us. Of course someone picks the tomahawk up and we have a gnarly storm that night. Not just one night, it stormed every night.

The air was so windy, no one’s tipi would stay up. The boys decided to sleep on top of their tipis in their bed rolls and let the wind chap them with the hopes they didn’t get electrocuted like the unfortunate cattle that seek shelter from trees. With the wind blowing so hard, if it had been sandy, they wouldn’t have had any skin left on their very tired and overworked bodies.

The next morning, feeling like

the beginning of a hot summer day, we slowly started taking down each and every tent and tipi. What a break from civilization we engaged in. As much as I could eat and live like this every day of the week, it was time for everyone to head on to the next adventure.

As every day grew hotter and the nights were longer, the week of spring branding was over.

Until next time, my favorite part of the year.

My favorite quote of the week by Garren: “Terry you look like the guy that they hired to do all the rope decoys at the Red Lobster and Long John Silver.”TM

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

January 17 - February 8

Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo

Will Rogers Memorial Center, Dickies Arena. Join us for the 124-year Texas tradition Jan. 17-Feb. 8. Get ready for rodeo, ranch rodeo, bull riding, horse shows, livestock shows, specialty shows, mustang magic, parades, carnival rides, food for every taste, acres of shopping, children's barnyard, live music daily and much more. Visit www.fwssr.com for more information and a complete schedule of events.

January 24 - 26

American Finals Rodeo

Tulsa Expo Square. 4145 E 21st St. Tulsa, OK 74114. The American Cowboys Rodeo Association presents the American Finals Rodeo at the Built Ford Tough Arena at the Tulsa Fairgrounds. This event will feature action-packed rodeo performances each day. The American Finals Rodeo will feature traditional rodeo events including bareback bronc riding, tie-down roping, breakaway roping, steer wrestling, saddle bronc riding, team roping, cowgirls' barrel racing and bull riding. Come watch the top 15 cowboys and cowgirls compete in a variety of Western events. While you're there, make sure to check out the event's free Western trade show. Call **918-456-9814** for more information on the American Finals Rodeo presented annually by the American Cowboys Rodeo Association.

January 22-26

Annual Denton Black Film Festival

Downtown Square, Denton. The Denton Black Film Festival has grown into a five-day event of engaging and entertaining films and activities. At the Denton Black Film Festival, we share stories of the Black community - its traditions, ideas and experiences - in a multitude of ways. Each festival, conducted annually in January, features Black cinema, music, art, spoken word, comedy, food and fashion. It's our way of bringing the Black experience to life. Visit www.dentonbfff.com for more information on the annual Denton Black Film Festival. You don't want to miss this.



**AMERICAN FINALS RODEO
JAN. 24-26**

FEBRUARY

January 30 - February 16

San Angelo Stock Show and Rodeo

200 West 43rd Street, San Angelo, Texas 76903. This annual stock show and rodeo ranks as one of the nation's largest rodeos in total contestants and the livestock show ranked fourth in the nation in entries. It provides the largest economic impact of any event in the city of San Angelo. The event attracts more than 5,500 4-H and FFA exhibitors from more than 200 Texas counties and is arguably the largest event in West Texas as it draws more than 150,000 spectators onto the Tom Green County Fairgrounds. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.sanangelorodeo.com.

February 6-23

San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo

723 AT&T Center Parkway, San Antonio, Texas 78219. Established in 1949, the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo has grown to be one of the largest and most prestigious single events in the city, with more than two million visitors each year. For more information, rodeo map, tickets and more visit www.sarodeo.com.

February 8

13th Annual Pick of the Day Farmers Spring Pair and Bred Heifer Sale

Southern Oklahoma Livestock Auction, Ada, Okla. Mark your calendars for the 13th Annual Pick of the Day Farmers Spring Pair and Bred Heifer Sale at noon on Feb. 8 at the Southern Oklahoma Livestock Auction. More than 450 head sell, 360 black commercial spring pairs and spring-calving heifers. Includes 120 from Penner Ranch, 40 of which will have calves at side by Penner Ranch bulls. For more information on the annual sale, call Sale Manager Dustin Layton at **405-464-2455**, Jason Borders at **580-618-0946**, Kyle Conley at **580-618-4533**, Harris and Vicky Penner at **580-618-0734**.

February 17

Albrecht/Penz President's Day Angus Bull & Female Sale

Clay Freeny Ranch, Caddo, OK. Selling 150 Angus bulls plus over 200 registered and commercial Angus females. Featuring performance Angus cattle bred for muscle, material, doability, performance, and profitability in all sectors of the real world. Watch and bid live on Superior. For more information, visit www.AlbrechtRanch.com or www.PenzAngusRanch.com.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 21

Selecting and Developing Bulls

Noble Research Institute, Oswalt Ranch, 18414 Dixon Road, Marietta, OK 73448. 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 21 at the Noble Research Institute, Oswalt Ranch. Evaluating and selecting bulls can be difficult with all the data that comes with them. Once you have selected your replacement bull, it is just as critical that he is developed properly prior to the breeding season and that his nutrition is managed post-breeding season. Join us to learn more about proper bull selection and development. \$25 registration fee, includes lunch. Registration fee goes up to \$35 for those who register within one week of the event. Visit www.noble.org.

February 25

Managing Crops in Hoop Houses

Noble Research Institute, Entry 5, Kruse Auditorium, 2510 Sam Noble Parkway, Ardmore, OK 73401. 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Feb. 25. Specialty crop growers worldwide continue to adopt high tunnel hoop houses because they provide an element of environmental control not possible with field production. During this course, you will learn how to manage the growing environment unique to hoop houses to produce high yielding, high quality crops. There is no registration fee for this event, but we ask that you preregister prior to the event. Visit www.noble.org for more information.

March 2

Reverse Rocking R Ranch Annual Bull Sale

Reverse Rocking R Ranch, 358 Laguna Madre Rd, Maxwell, NM 87728. Reverse Rocking R Ranch, where the grasslands meet the Rockies. Annual bull sale at 1 p.m. MT on March 2 at the Ranch in Maxwell, New Mexico. Selling 120 Angus bulls, over half of the offering aged bulls, two-thirds can be used on heifers or cows, many are full embryo transplant brothers. Free nationwide delivery, volume discounts, repeat buyer discounts. Bid live on DV Auction. Chris and Krista Earl, owner, **630-675-6559** or svfchief@aol.com, Trent and Emily Earl, manager, **719-557-9915**, Garrett Earl, herdsman, **630-400-1225**, or visit <http://ck6consulting.com/reverse-rocking-r-ranch>.

WICHITA FALLS RANCH, FARM AND HEMP EXPO

MARCH 11-12



MARCH

March 6

2020 International Super Sale

HLSR NRG Center. Don't miss the 2020 International Super Sale at the HLSR NRG Center at 6 p.m. on March 6. Quality females consigned. The Santa Gertrudis herd bull you choose today will improve tomorrow's profits. Choose from Wendt Ranches - the Herd Bull Replacement Center. Email wendtranches@hotmail.com.

March 5

Beef Quality Assurance Certification

Noble Research Institute, Entry 5, Kruse Auditorium, 2510 Sam Noble Parkway, Ardmore, OK 73401. The Noble Research Institute presents Beef Quality Assurance Certification from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. on March 5 at the Noble Research Institute, Entry 5, Kruse Auditorium. Beef Quality Assurance raises consumer confidence through proper management education and guidelines for the beef industry. This workshop will give insight into BQA standards for animal care, record-keeping, nutrition and carcass quality. You can become BQA certified with successful completion. There is no registration fee for this event, but we ask that you preregister prior to the event. Visit www.noble.org for more information.

March 11-12

Wichita Falls Ranch, Farm and Hemp Expo

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Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean

Old World Bluestems Volume 2

In Volume 1 of "Grazing Old World Bluestems," Tony Dean addressed the issues surrounding the Old World Bluestem (OWB) family, including the invasive nature of these grasses. In this issue, he examines OWBs as a forage for livestock and the management needed to make these grasses productive.

Old World Bluestem as a Forage for Livestock

OWBs were initially brought to the United States as a forage for livestock and for erosion control capability. Ironically, some of the characteristics that make these species invasive also cause them to be a desirable grass for grazing.

One of the primary survival characteristics of OWBs is their ability to withstand heavy grazing. OWBs are genetically prone to grow upright like our native bluestems; however, with heavy grazing pressure, plants begin to take a sod growth form. This protects the leaves, as they are only a few inches above the ground. When moisture is adequate, a seed stalk is produced.

Contrary to what some ranchers believe, OWBs are relatively sought after by cattle as a forage supply in much of North Texas. When OWBs occupy just part of a pasture, cattle often graze them to the ground when they find them, especially early in the summer. After repeated heavy use, instead of growing upward, the grass assumes the classic low-to-the-ground growth form to protect itself. Thus, many ranchers never see it looking like an upright forage grass and come to think of it as a low-producing invasive.

Dr. Ron Sosebee, Professor Emeritus with Texas Tech University's Department of Natural



The straw-colored grass in the background is Old World bluestem established in 1972. Little bluestem is beginning to occupy the OWB area now that rotation grazing is being done. Also, note the presence of a heavy weed cover outside of the OWB, but lack of almost any weeds in the bluestem area. The cattle were just turned into this pasture, and chose the OWB area to begin grazing. Photo taken in October of 2019 in Clay County.

Resources Management, stated when established in the western part of the state and managed correctly, Dahl bluestem can often out produce native species in pounds per acre of forage produced.

Total seasonal dry matter production under dryland conditions ranged from one to two tons per acre at Woodward, Okla. At New Deal, Texas, total dry matter yields under dryland conditions averaged 1.5 tons per acre, while approaching eight tons under full irrigation.

A study conducted by West Texas A&M University estimated the value of OWBs under rotation grazing and alternative stocking rates. The conclusion was that, given the scarce water supply developing in the Texas Panhandle, growing Old World bluestems for grazing on marginal dryland acres could be a viable economic alternative to cropping.

Daily gains while grazing Dahl bluestem at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, have been about 2.5 pounds per day on steers,

but gains reduce as the forage matures.

A rancher in Clay County in North Texas has gained extensive experience in establishing and managing WW-B.Dahl bluestem on his ranch for the last 12 years. I asked him a series of questions about Old World Bluestem grass:

1. Why have you chosen Dahl bluestem as a significant part of your forage base?

Answer: I don't know any other
Continued on page 64

Continued from page 63

er perennial grass that can equal the pounds of production per acre under dryland conditions with low or no fertilizer applied. I only invest in fertilizer on acres we cut for hay, and when we do apply fertilizer, Dahl responds very well. We also have fewer fire ants and less hog damage in Dahl bluestem pastures.

2. Does it bother you that Dahl has a reputation for being very invasive?

Answer: So far I have not had any cases of Dahl aggressively spreading out from fields I am using. The way we manage it, it seems to honor our fence lines. We have probably moved some of it around as the seed attached to our pickups and combines.

3. Can you compare wildlife activity in your Dahl areas as compared to other fields?

Answer: I would say there is a little less wildlife activity in the Dahl fields. However, we keep a lot of native grass on the ground in other pastures, and we have very few quail in any fields. I have jumped deer that were bedding down in Dahl. I enjoy wildlife, but I raise a lot of Dahl because I'm in the beef business to pay the bills. The wildlife concern has not been a critical issue with me.

4. Are any areas of Dahl assuming a low prostrate growth form resembling sod?

Answer: No. I think that only happens when there is too much grazing pressure on the grasses.

5. How is palatability of Dahl bluestem?

Answer: Good, especially during the growing season. TDN is very good. I have a farm with separate fields of coastal, Klein and Dahl bluestem, and after frost, cattle go for the Dahl first.

6. Can you give some production estimates?

Answer: Yes:

a. We have a 34-acre field of pure Dahl bluestem. In 2017, we cut 165 round bales weighing 1,350 pounds. Then in the fall we harvested \$100/acre of seed. We grazed it after the seed was harvested.

b. We graze a 550 acre field with a Dahl/Klein mix. Weed control is done only when necessary, but no fertilizer is applied. This field runs 80 pair year round.

In the early years of establishing OWBs across north Texas, many ranchers harvested OWB seed from their fields. They sold the seed to neighbors or used it to expand plantings on their own ranches.

Management of Old World Bluestems



When continually overgrazed, Old World bluestems assume a low-to-the-ground growth form with leaves not more than a few inches above the ground as shown in the photo with the cap. They can survive in this form and even put up a seedhead. When properly grazed, OWBs assume an upright growth pattern with leaves two to four feet tall as shown in the photo with the shovel. This upright growth produces more volume of forage and a higher quality forage.

For a number of years, producers in South Texas have been trying to find a way to eradicate OWBs in their pastures. Texas AgriLife Extension bulletin "Introduced Bluestem Grasses: Management on Native Lands" describes several methods being used in the effort to rid pastures of OWBs. In 2016, one project involved using chemicals, plowing, mowing,

reseeding, summer burning, and combinations of these practices. The following are the researchers' findings (summarized):

1. Following summer burning, crown survival and new seedlings allowed the bluestems to recover.

2. Plowing combinations were best at re-

Continued on page 67

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100 ACRES | CLAY COUNTY



STANFIELD RANCH

\$2,750/Ac

The Stanfield Ranch is about half wooded and half farmland. The east half along Zachary Lane is farmland. The west half is primarily wooded with mesquites, a few scattered oaks, with rolling to sloping terrain and great views. There are two stock ponds and a seasonal creek. The Little Wichita River is approximately 1 mile south and the Red River is approximately 2 miles east. For the most part this ranch is surrounded by large acreage neighbors. Electricity is available and well water appears available.

67 ACRES | JACK COUNTY



MCBEE RANCH - TRACT 3

\$2,950/Ac

67 acres located in northern Jack County. It is heavily wooded with primarily oaks, a few scattered mesquite. The terrain is gently rolling across most of the ranch with good elevation change. The highest point is located along the south portion then generally slopes south. Access is off FM 2190 and a private deeded all weather road. Electricity is available on the property and well water is available. Additional acreage available. Various size tracts available.

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Great combo ranch, primarily native mesquite pasture, 80 acres of farmland, level to rolling topo with various overlooks and steep embankments offering many scenic vantage points, 4 stock ponds, some with fish, Coal Creek and a seasonal creek. There is a 30x50 insulated workshop with 300 sf of finished space, 2 large sliding doors and carports on either end of the shop, a 30x60 metal equipment shed and steel livestock corrals, boundary is fenced and interior is cross fenced.

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HAMMON RIVER RANCH

\$2,723/Ac

The Hammon River Ranch is prime recreational land located on the Red River in northern Clay County. It consists of 1,909 acres, being primarily wooded river bottom, along with several food plots and 170 acre wheat field. It has nearly 2.5 miles of river frontage and a large oxbow that holds water year around. The property is fenced and cross fenced. There is a water well and electricity is on the ranch. This is a very nice large recreational ranch on the Red River, you won't find another like it.

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ducing the bluestems, but when plowing was used as a single treatment, the grasses fully recovered.

3. All treatments temporarily reduced the introduced bluestems, but in the span of a few months to a year, the bluestems all recovered to or surpassed their original density.

4. Introduced bluestems can be killed by plowing, applying glyphosate, then replanting with native seed. However, without follow-up management practices, the bluestems repopulate the area.

An Oklahoma State study found OWBs can alter carbon: nitrogen ratios in soil and alter the composition of soil microbial communities. Growth of native plant species may be affected by these changes in soil properties, and there is some evidence an allelopathic toxin may be produced by yellow bluestems, which can reduce reproduction growth and survival of native bluestems.

There are several factors that can influence how OWBs grow, including geographical location, soils, and, probably most important, grazing management. They will certainly react differently on a ranch where grazing is excluded as opposed to a ranch practicing heavy grazing. OWBs are grasses that can survive in north Texas without fertilizer, but have the capability to respond well if fertilized.

A rancher in North Texas seeded a field with a combination of some native deep rooted grasses, kleingrass, and WW-B Dahl bluestem. He was successful in getting a stand containing almost all species seeded. Within five years, he reported the Dahl bluestem was increasing in dominance in the field. In discussing management on the area, he advised he was putting very little grazing pressure on the field. Without at least some degree of grazing pressure, OWBs will likely become more dominant.

On a personal note, on our ranch in Clay County in North Texas, we have experienced the opposite scenario in that Little bluestem and Indiangrass plants are becoming established, in significant numbers, in areas previously dominated by OWBs. The presence of these deep rooted native perennials has become increasingly common as a result of livestock rotation and a common-sense stocking rate. Pastures are subjected to a moderate rate of grazing pressure followed by a rest and recovery period. We also have found that in a rotation system, when we introduce cattle to pastures containing areas of Old World bluestem, the introduced bluestems are heavily



This pasture, once dominated by Old World bluestem, is now filled with Indiangrass and Little bluestem due to a proper stocking rate and rotation grazing the last 9 years. This greater diversity of grasses causes the OWB area to be much more wildlife friendly and of more grazing value.

used. We will be fencing these areas, as best we can, into separate pastures in order to have better control of grazing. Old World bluestems have a potential for much more forage production and higher quality forage when they are properly grazed and allowed to remain in upright growth instead of a prostrate growth pattern under heavy grazing.

Permanently removing Old World bluestems from pastures where they have established themselves has proved to be exceedingly difficult if not impossible. Grazing management may be the only way we can have any real effect on established Old World bluestems, especially where they are mixed with native pastures.


Rhett Johnson is the former Natural Resources Conservation Service Texas State Range Conservationist who is now retired from NRCS and is a consultant in range, pasture and wildlife management. He also is managing a ranch in central north Texas. Johnson has had extensive experience with OWBs during his NRCS career and his current consulting activity. Johnson said, "King Ranch bluestem (KR) has been cursed and discussed for many years. The grass is either hated or loved, depending upon the individual objectives."

"One place OWBs have in Texas ranching is they can provide a good potential cover for worn out soils. I have managed fields that had lost most of the topsoil to erosion and needed a protective cover of grasses to prevent further deterioration. KR is about the only perennial that will establish on these areas," Johnson explained.

"Where we already have Old World bluestems established in a pasture, I don't see

producers being able to permanently remove the plant. But, through intensive rotation management, the taller deep-rooted perennial native grasses can invade OWB stands over time and bring the areas closer to a native environment. Also, under well planned rotation management, OWBs will begin to grow in a more erect form, which will greatly increase leaf production and total grazing value. These grasses have some potential, and I think the best thing to do is learn to live with them."

If, by using grazing management, we can increase the presence of native, perennial grasses and forbs in OWB-dominated pastures in North Texas, we could not only increase diversity of grazing plants and increase grazing value, but also would benefit and encourage active wildlife presence.

There are certainly reason for ranchers to be aware of the threat of invasive species, in both animal and plant forms. As this article is being written, United States Congressman Michael Conway from Texas, Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, released remarks on the threat that noxious and invasive species can have on Texas agriculture. He reaffirmed the need for continued response and control efforts. However, Old World bluestems have established themselves as a part of our landscape. Whether or not they eventually end up on the Texas list of invasive plants, most grazing specialists, including ranchers, believe we will not economically be able to remove them from our pastures. Instead of considering these plants our enemy and spending time and money trying to eradicate them, maybe we should recognize their strong points and make them work to our benefit. 

Confessions of a HUNTER

By Andy Anderson

Bat Fishing Crazy

It was summer, school was out and my best friend Chris came to stay the weekend. Chris and I were about 12 years old, knew everything and weren't scared of anything. We never stayed in the house, we were always running around the ranch, through the creeks, fishing, hunting or building something. It was a typical hot summer day, we had been taking it easy at the stock tank, got bored and jumped in for some swimming to cool off. It was fun to dive down to the bottom where the water turned colder, dig your hands into the mud and hold on as long as you could. The water was cold enough that after a few dives you would actually get the chills. It was a great way to cool down; of course, the water was so red, you couldn't open your eyes and your shorts would be stained red and nothing could wash it out.

It was getting late, the sky was fading into a light pink hue. Time to get to the house before mom started hollering dinner was ready. Walking up through the pasture, the house slowly coming into sight, we could hear some kids laughing and see people outside on the porch. Clearly, we had guests. As we approached the house in our cutoff blue jean shorts with no shirts on, I realized it was some of my sister's friends. Girls.

They were younger and an-



Andy Anderson and his childhood friend Chris never stayed in the house during summer. Instead, they were always running around the ranch, through the creeks, fishing, hunting or building something. (Courtesy photo)

noying, always asking questions, following us around and just getting in the way, but the all too familiar smell of the BBQ firing up quickly took our minds off the pure torture we were about to endure, to curiosity of what was about to be placed upon the grill for us to devour. We made our way to the back porch, stomachs grumbling and appetites growing as we got closer. Just about the time we neared the porch my mom came outside, looking at Chris and me with a frustrated stare.

"Get in the house and get cleaned up for dinner, and throw those shorts away, they are ruined."

Chris and I ventured into the house to get cleaned up about the time the girls realized we had arrived.

We tore into some pork chops, fried potatoes and fresh green beans with homemade yeast rolls. I loved those rolls, warm with butter dripping from the inside. Man, Chris and I were happy to eat outside just to get away from

the chatter and annoying pestering by the girls.

We had a spot near a small shed that was slightly lit from the security light on the telephone pole nearby. It was just out of sight, but close enough to still hear when it was time to come in for the night; plus, the girls didn't like it and left us alone.

Chris and I had finished filling up and were relaxing in some old rocking chairs, not saying much, just kind of looking around and being at peace. All of a sudden Chris pipes up, "What the heck was that?"

I turn to look in the direction he was starrng as he described seeing something big flying around the big security light. I peered into the darkness, around the hue of the light to see thousands of bugs flyng around, in and out of the light, bouncing off the light, falling and then flying off again. Nothing really out of the ordinary, pretty common thing that time of year. Just about the time I was turning to look at Chris, he said, "Keep looking, it's huge, something big is flying around that light."

He was excited and was very serious. After a few more seconds starrng into the light, I saw it. It was quick, it was big and it dang sure wasn't a bug.

Chris and I eased up to the
Continued on page 71

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Continued from page 68

light using the side of the house as cover to mask our presence. We stood there in the shadows of the house waiting to catch a glimpse of what was flying around. It didn't take long and there it was again, so fast in and out of the light we couldn't tell for sure, had to be some kind of bird, we argued. Then, almost as if it wanted to be seen, it appeared and hovered right, smack, dab in the middle of the light, a bat. Just then a few more could be seen flying around. We crept up closer, ever so excited to see these bats in action. Flying around at Mach 1, snatching bugs from the air. Spectacular to watch, almost hypnotic to watch the bats doing acrobatics through the air, and every now and then you could hear them squeaking.

Just then, the back-door slammed shut breaking our concentration, the girls were heard calling out for us. Chris and I remained quiet, slowly creeping out of sight and into the shop. We didn't have time for those girls. In the shop Chris and I began discussing our observations of the bats feeding, it was pretty cool to watch. I took a seat on a nearby bucket, Chris plopped down on a hay bale, kicked back and said, "Ya know, I wonder if we could catch us one of those bats?"

Now, how in the heck were we going to do that? After much deliberation and a few failed attempts, I said "Let's get a fishing pole, tie a rooster tail on and try casting up there."

I fetched my spin cast rod and reel, tied on a rooster tail and started casting about in the air around the light. Problem was, every time I cast it up, it would shoot up like a rocket, passing the light and hitting the ground only to get hung up in the grass.

Chris decided we needed something lighter and with no hooks. We retreated to the barn to dig through the tackle box. After a few minutes, Chris devised a plan. He cut a small chunk of cloth from a

rag he found. Took a small weight he found in the tackle box, centered it in the middle of the cloth and tied the fishing line around the bottom of the weight with the cloth folded over it. It looked like a miniature ghost when he finished.

Chris promptly and confidently strutted over to the light to give a cast and just as he gave it a flip, it went out a few feet, stopped and flung back into his face. Now, Chris got frustrated and just started slinging the pole around, back and forth, cursing now and again. I start to laugh when Chris yelled out, "I got one."

As I am running to Chris, I can see the line tight and nearly straight up in the sky moving in a circular motion. I stop a few feet away as he reels it in, sure enough Chris caught a bat, but that thing was not having any of it. Chris reeled it down to within a few feet of the tip of the pole, it flailing around screeching and flapping like crazy. Chris was screaming at me to grab it and I didn't want any part of it by then.

Chris was walking to me yelling at me to grab it, and as he was getting closer, I was backing up. Just as I came to the corner of the house, Chris managed to pull the

bat down to eye level. I reached in to try and grab it as it nearly took the top of my head off. I ducked down, glancing back up just in time to see a herd of girls rounding the corner of the house.

Now, these fine young ladies had no idea what was going on. All they knew is they had heard Chris and me and as far as they were concerned, they had found us; and found us they did. Chris brought the bat around for a second attempt for me to catch it just as the girls came to stop near me, all of them staring at Chris, in the middle of the road, with a fishing pole, dancing around like a fool.

"What are y'all....?" Is all I heard from one of the girls as Chris lined me up for a second chance to catch the bat. Problem was, Chris didn't see the girls and sent it right at them.

That thing bounced off one of the girl's heads and smacked another in the face. It was absolute pandemonium in a split second. They screamed the most blood curling screams, fell down, fell on top of each other, crying as dust filled the warm summer night air. The bat must have had enough, too. As the line went limp the girls disappeared around the corner

of the house; the faint whimpers could still be heard. Chris and I were staring at each other in disbelief and slowly began to chuckle as the totality of what just happened settled in our minds. As I walked up to Chris, he and I laughing and smiling from ear to ear, we heard the all too familiar and daunting call from my mom. Our complete first, middle and last names called out with authority and orders to report to the front porch, we stashed the fishing pole and walked towards the front porch.

Standing in the yard, looking up at my mom, I could see through the door into the living room. Three young ladies, hair messed up, covered in dirt, tears flowing down their cheeks as they whimpered and were telling on us.

After explaining to my mom what had happened and that what happened to the girls was not intentional, she simply said to leave the bats alone, we'd get rabies or something and to go to my room for the night.

Chris and I laughed nearly all night about catching that bat, and I don't care if it hurt the girls' feelings, because they sure left us alone the whole weekend after that. ®



An attempt to catch a bat with a fishing pole didn't go as planned. (Courtesy photo)

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THE GARDEN GUY

OUTDOORS



By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker



Denim 'n Lace offers blue flowers with amethyst calyces on stiff 32-inch stems. (Photo courtesy of Proven Winners)

Pantone Color of the Year: Classic Blue an 'Inspiration for North Texas Gardeners'

The new year will be 'Rockin' thanks to Proven Winners introduction of the Salvia Rockin Blue Suede Shoes. Not only will this salvia bring in the hummingbirds, bees and butterflies all summer in North Texas but will be trending with the celebration of 2020 Pantone Color of the Year 'Classic Blue'.

To be exact Classic Blue is Pantone 19-4052, for those wanting to be in vogue by painting the master bedroom or living room or tweaking the wardrobe. In the gardening world I look at the Pantone Colors of the Year with the proverbial 'Chip Card.'

Chip cards are what everyone gets at the paint store where the top of the card has Classic Blue and as you glance downward it takes you through the various related shades. When it comes to flowers it would be near impossible to be exact on Pantone 19-4052.

Blue is one of the colors that catches your eye when used in the garden and is a color we all treasure. The word "blue" itself can cause confusion and invoke several different feelings or thoughts because it carries a lot of meanings



Monarchs were among several species of butterflies that feasted on Rockin Blue Suede Shoes at The Garden Guy's house. (Photo courtesy Norman Winter)

in the English culture and language. Friends are true blue or perhaps you are feeling blue.

What we do know is that most of us want

some blue in our gardens. It is the ultimate cool color, and I don't mean "in vogue," either. Blue is unique in that if you give it a hint of another color, you still have a shade of blue. Oddly, these blue shades work harmoniously with each other.

So, while Pantone and their color gurus set the new trend, know the garden world wants to be a participant and join the 'Blue' celebration. Proven Winners has gone full onboard developing promotional pieces showcasing their extraordinary blue flowers. In all, there is a baker's dozen of tried and true, award winning blue flowers for gardeners to use in creating dazzling designs.

Rockin Blue Suede Shoes salvia debuting this spring offers a most rare shade of blue coupled with an incredible performance. As garden gurus we often catch ourselves using descriptors such as hummingbird magnet, or pollinator magnet. With Rockin Blue Suede Shoes salvia get the camera ready.

In my garden it reached just under four-feet

Continued on page 74

Continued from page 73

tall and three-feet wide, blooming until late November. It was a never-ending feast by hummingbirds, swallowtails, monarchs and various sulphur butterflies.

Denim 'n Lace is another outstanding choice and is the 2020 Proven Winners National Perennial of the Year. It will quickly become the Russian Sage in which all others compare. The Garden Guy has always loved Russian Sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) even though they were typically loose and airy and falling over.

Denim 'n Lace is different offering blue flowers partnered with amethyst calyxes and borne on sturdy 32-inch upright stems with a 36-inch spread. It will bloom mid-summer through fall adding rich beauty while bringing in hummingbirds and yet offering deer resistance.

Catalina Midnight Blue torenia

or wishbone flower, and Blue My Mind *evolvulus* are two more outstanding choices in the baker's dozen. Both have won awards from Texas to Michigan and Georgia to Minnesota. Catalina Midnight Blue is a deep blue, a true-blue, while Blue My Mind offers olive grey green foliage that sports icy blue blooms.

Remember that blue works with any other color in the garden. Its opposite is orange which may be the most wonderful marriage in gardening.

Last year's Pantone Color of the Year 'Living Coral' also creates a 'take your breath away' partnership with blue. Lastly put your favorite blue with red, and you have the beginning of a patriotic garden. Make plans now and let Pantone Classic Blue be the inspiration in planting this spring. Follow me on Facebook @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy.®



Rockin Blue Suede Shoes Salvia will debut this spring to the delight of hummingbirds, butterflies and of course, gardeners too. (Photo courtesy Norman Winter)

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