

NORTH TEXAS FARM & RANCH



ENTER

August 2022

Ginger Duke

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FREE



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Bobby Norris

📍 Regional Director/Agent, Licensed in TX

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The ranching industry has always been a part of Bobby Norris' life. Born and raised on a large ranch in Colorado Springs, Bobby brought his own equine operation to Texas in 1982. He currently trains cutting horses at his ranch in Mineral Wells, Texas.

Bobby's affiliations include: Member, National Cowboy Hall of Fame; Trustee, Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame; Past president, Rocky Mountain Quarter Horse Youth Association; Past president, American Junior Quarter Horse Association; Past president American Cutting Horse Association (three terms); Board Member, National Cutting Horse Association; Member, National Cattlemen's Beef Association; Founder, Roundup for Autism; Nominee, Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame, 2013; Honorary member, Cowboy artists of America; Executive Committee and Board of Directors, National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

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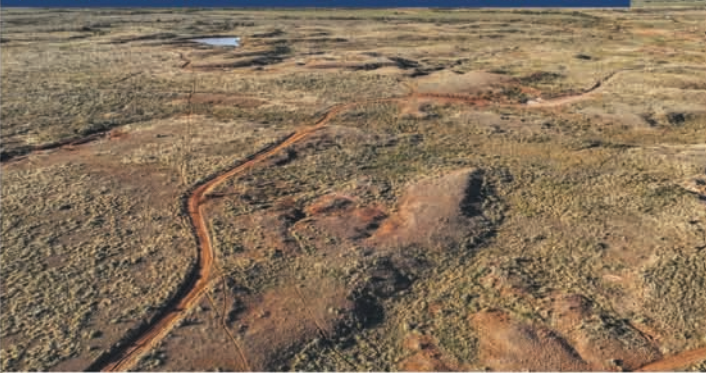
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7,085.56 ACRES | WICHITA & WILBARGER COUNTIES



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23.078 ACRES | MONTAGUE COUNTY



POLK ESTATES

\$12,300/Ac

Nice homesite minutes from Bowie. Located at the dead end of a private gravel road with additional frontage on FM 1816. This tract is open grass pasture with a pond, livestock barn, corrals, water well and electricity. The terrain is level to sloping east with the high point being along the private road frontage. Electricity is available. Light Deed Restrictions apply.

29 ACRES | JACK COUNTY



PROSPECT

\$8,900/Ac

Nice piece of land located in the north central portion of Jack County near Post Oak. The land heavily wooded, primarily being oaks with scattered mesquite. The topography is level to sloping south east. The highest elevated point is along the road frontage. This area offers a great build sites with spectacular views. Electricity and well water is available.

121 ACRES + HOUSE | WICHITA COUNTY



NEW LISTING

REIS FARM

\$675,000

Located 2.5 miles north of Electra, at the NE corner of Old Lake Road and Brosch Road. The house consists of 2,045 sf, brick, built in 2001, 3 bedrooms, 2 bath, 2 car garage, total electric, chain link fenced backyard, storm closet in master bath, new roof installed in 2015, 24' x 36' metal workshop built in 2009. There is 85 acres of cultivation, balance being native pasture both wooded and open, level to sloping terrain, seasonal creek, stock pond, no oil production.

167 ACRES + HOUSE | MONTAGUE COUNTY



NEW LISTING

4S RANCH

\$2,213,148

This is a diverse property improved with a Barndominium. It is located 3.5 miles east of Sunset in Montague County. The land has approximately 60 acres of cultivation with the balance being heavily wooded. Topography is level to rolling offering impressive views. There are 3 stock ponds, Couch Branch Creek extends through the property, interior cross fencing, pens, loafing shed with tack room. The Barndominium consist of 1,600/sf, built in 2015, 2 bedrooms, 2 baths with an attached carport. The potential uses for this property are endless. Jon Moss Listing Agent- 940-867-6743

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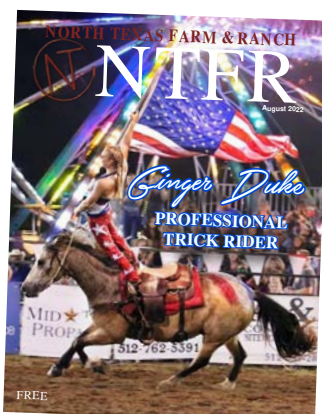


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ON THE COVER

On the cover is Ginger Duke, lead performer for "The Dynamite Dames," as well as a professional trick rider, roman rider and liberty horse trainer. (Photo courtesy Tricia Butler Photography)



letter from the editor

Hello readers, and welcome to the August issue of North Texas Farm & Ranch magazine.

We enter the hottest part of a Texas summer and yearn for the cooler



temperatures to come sweeping through. As I write this, it is still mid-July. I know as this issue reaches your hands, the air will still be heavy with the summer heat, but I do pray some rain has made its way to our area. The last two years have been hard enough on our farmers and ranchers, but with the added drought, many are facing tough decisions - such as the selling of their livestock - as the sun continues to beat down on dry ground and wildfires become rampant across the area. However, it brings to mind the quote from Robert H. Schuller, "Tough times never last, but tough people do." And there's no one tougher than the backbone of our country - those in agriculture.

This month's profile is the definition of tough. Ginger Duke, lead performer for "The Dynamite Dames," leaves audiences breathless with her adrenaline-packed trick riding routines. Despite a near-death experience four years ago that resulted in doctors telling her she would never ride again, she continues to perform as a professional trick rider, roman rider and liberty horse trainer.

Our contributors are also full of educational and inspiring content for your summer reading. If you have any stories you would like to see in NTFR, I would love to hear from you. Email editor@ntfronline.com.

To subscribe by mail call 940-872-5922. Make sure to like our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram and Twitter. Wishing you all a very happy August!

Dani Blackburn

Dani Blackburn, Editor
editor@ntfronline.com

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Wildfire Readiness

By as early as May, wildfires in Texas had caused the loss of roughly 433,000 acres of land.

61

The Garden Guy

Blue Fortune has native DNA, Agastache foeniculum, that was crossed with Agastache rugosa.



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READ MORE: Ask anyone in the ranching business, or in agriculture in general, and they will tell you that they spend every day doing what they love. That is usually followed by quips such as, "You have to love it 'cause you aren't in it for the easy hours," or, "It's definitely because I love it. It's sure not because I'm getting rich at it." The list could continue for the rest of the page. READ MORE: <http://ntfronline.com/2022/07/is-freedom-really-free/>



TWITTER FEED



NTFR Magazine

Engelmann's daisy grows from a very large stout taproot making it very drought resistant. READ MORE: ntfronline.com/2022/07/grazin...



Grazing
North Texas

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DENTON COUNTY COWBOY CHURCH BULL BASH

August 13

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MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

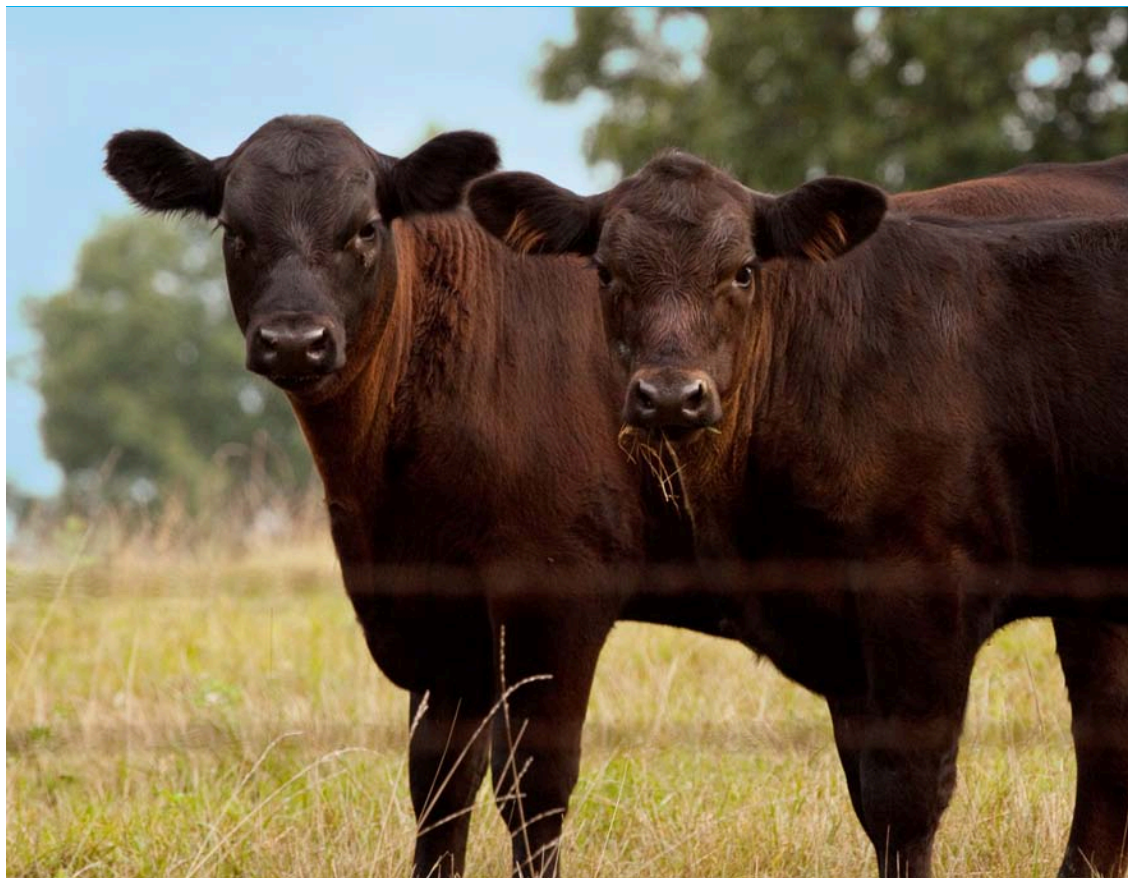
By Rayford Pullen | rcpullen@yahoo.com

While we associate August with plenty of hot weather, now is really the time to think cool, as in cool season pastures, while at the same time knowing that successfully farming and growing pastures and crops outdoors is at the mercy of the weather.

What to do is the question on everyone's mind when it comes to feed, fuel, fertilizer and all the other expenses associated with ranching. While our bottom line has not increased proportionally to the costs associated with running cattle, there are still necessary requirements with the one at the top of the list being forage followed closely by feed, which in many cases are one and the same if cool season pastures are utilized.

What is the biggest factor, other than rain, that determines whether we have both fall and spring grazing from our fall planted forages? If you guessed sunlight, I think you are right. Whether you are broadcasting or planting no-till, there will be very limited growth in the fall if the grass you are putting them in has much height at all. Legumes, ryegrass and cereal grains do not grow much in the shade, although they will germinate and not start growing until the grass they are planted in freezes, thus allowing sunlight in as it becomes desiccated.

How do we reduce the shading effect? There are several ways to do this with grazing being the beginning. Keep the grass grazed off as short as possible before planting, then leave the cattle on the seeded pasture until it rains. The next best thing in addition to the grazing, and in the case of Bermuda grass pastures, is to run a disc, with the disc running as straight as possible, over the pasture being planted immediately



To help reduce the shading effect, keep the grass grazed off as short as possible before planting, then leave the cattle on the seeded pasture until it rains. (Photo courtesy Metro Creative)

prior to or after planting. When done together, this will usually double your fall forage production. Running the disc over the pasture twice is even better. One thing to consider and remember when discing, is our main objective is to set the Bermuda back by cutting the roots so that when it does rain, and the Bermuda begins to grow, it will take it longer to shade over the newly germinating plants resulting in them being able to grow more quickly. Also, if you have plowed a Bermuda grass pasture before, if you turn up much soil, it will make your pastures rough.


When you plant is determined by your location as it relates to geography. In North Texas, we

are looking at mid-September while further south, army worm consideration becomes a factor with mid-October being the start time. Either way, we prefer to have the plants up and growing as soon as possible in the fall to take advantage of the extra day length and milder temperatures before winter actually arrives.

If you have plowed ground where you can plant, we like to run a disc over the ground to eliminate as much vegetation as possible and work the ground a few inches deep. We will then run a soil packer over the ground before we broadcast our seed and fertilizer. In our case, this usually results in the ryegrass being ready to graze three weeks earlier when

compared to packing after we plant and six weeks quicker than if we do not pack at all.

We plan to have two to three tons of forage available for our cattle at a cost of approximately \$50 per ton or less. When compared to hay or sacked feed, this is extremely cost effective and ultimately helps keep our cost of doing business down.


How you plant is just as important as what you plant and how it all relates to the best utilization of the fertilizer and return on our planting costs. For more information, you can visit www.pullenan-gus.com and click on Marshall ryegrass. Pray for rain while you are at it. It is a wonderful time to be in the cattle business. 



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AG *elsewhere* MONTANA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK




E Everyone is getting their hay wrapped up and it'll be time for fall works. 



AG *elsewhere* WYOMING

PHOTO BY TRESSA LAWRENCE

Although it is early and many producers are still getting their own hay off of their fields, those on the hunt for affordable hay are appearing to not have much luck. Spring rains edged many counties just outside of the bounds of being declared a drought county, meaning any federal assistance that many farmers and ranchers in Wyoming have been relying on to help with the drastically increasing cost of hay is not available. 

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LAND MARKET REPORT


JULY 2022

By Jared Groce

Many folks, including myself, had predicted last year that the increase in land pricing would likely continue in 2022 barring a catastrophic event. Well, that event is here and is called inflation.

What will that do to land prices for us? Of course no one really knows, but here are some things to consider:

According to the Texas Real Estate Center at Texas A&M, we saw a 19.52 percent decrease in land prices in 1975 when we had the oil crises and inflation. We saw a 13.59 percent decrease in 1989 during the recession led by Iraq invading Kuwait. There seems to be a common thread of fuel prices, inflation, and land prices. However, what we had in 1975 and 1989 was the fact that so much of Texas land had a highest and best use of agriculture, but today, practically none of our North Texas land has a highest and best use of agriculture simply because the price is too high. Developers and end users looking for land will pay \$15,000 an acre in a heartbeat, but there is no way to make a living on that price of land with agriculture.

No one knows for sure what will happen, but I think it is safe to say that people are going to continue to immigrate to North Texas in droves, and this demand will likely keep land prices high. Will it go down some? It might. Will it stay where it is? It might. Will it go up again sometime in the near future? Yes. I would say that if you are thinking of selling in the next three to four years, you might be at the top of the rise right now. 

DENTON COUNTY					
CITY	ACRES	\$ / ACRE	ASK/SELL RATIO	DOM	
CROSS ROADS	16.000	\$115,625.00	81.70	80	
AVG	16.000	\$115,625.00	81.70	80	

COOKE COUNTY					
CITY	ACRES	\$ / ACRE	ASK/SELL RATIO	DOM	
ERA	15.250	\$16,721	100.00	337	
VALLEY VIEW	15.000	\$22,500	100.00	3	
COLLINSVILLE	11.000	\$36,273	99.80	38	
VALLEY VIEW	29.800	\$24,664	98.00	13	
GAINESVILLE	90.000	\$11,111	83.30	12	
WHITESBORO	45.000	\$18,500.00	100.00	186	
GAINESVILLE	10.000	\$19,900.00	100.00	186	
GAINESVILLE	41.950	\$12,586.00	100.60	81	
GAINESVILLE	287.000	\$8,188.00	93.60	246	
VALLEY VIEW	624.400	\$27,226.00	83.80	205	
AVG	116.94	\$19,767.00	95.90	131	

MONTAGUE COUNTY					
	ACRES	\$ / ACRE	ASK/SELL RATIO	DOM	
FORESTBURG	22.750	\$14,418.00	96.50	53	
SUNSET	21.150	\$16,454.00	94.00	56	
BOWIE	22.970	\$15,500.00	93.90	27	
SAINT JO	55.340	\$11,250.00	98.80	4	
SUNSET	31.250	\$28,800.00	92.30	51	
MONTAGUE	14.000	\$21,429.00	142.90	105	
SUNSET	50.000	\$12,360.00	123.60	8	
AVG	31.070	\$17,173.00	106.00	43	

WISE COUNTY					
	ACRES	\$ / ACRE	ASK/SELL RATIO	DOM	
SUNSET	10.080	\$17,063.00	97.00	66	
DECATUR	11.000	\$25,000.00	100.00	14	
POOLVILLE	13.000	\$21,923.00	95.00	78	
ALVORD	20.490	\$16,841.00	100.00	6	
DECATUR	11.840	\$100.00	5.00	3	
DECATUR	12.490	\$30,000.00	100	14	
BRIDGEPORT	54.280	\$9,313.00	101.80	227	
DECATUR	100.000	\$16,485.00	82.40	20	
PARADISE	194.020	\$15,668.00	89.40	3	
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SUNSET	10.010	\$17,483.00	92.1	70	
SUNSET	10.010	\$18,482.00	97.40	94	
SUNSET	10.010	\$19,481.00	100.00	72	
DECATUR	11.380	\$18,000.00	100.00	511	
DECATUR	12.930	\$18,000.00	100.00	526	
DECATUE	14.980	\$24,700.00	96.1	156	
DECATUR	17.210	\$26,142.00	90.1	196	
CHICO	33.560	\$19,517.00	94.5	352	
BRIDGEPORT	182.270	\$9,971	99.7	176	
AVG	38.920	\$19,555.000	96.2	140	

Bovine Papillomavirus (Cattle Warts)

By Barry Whitworth, DVM

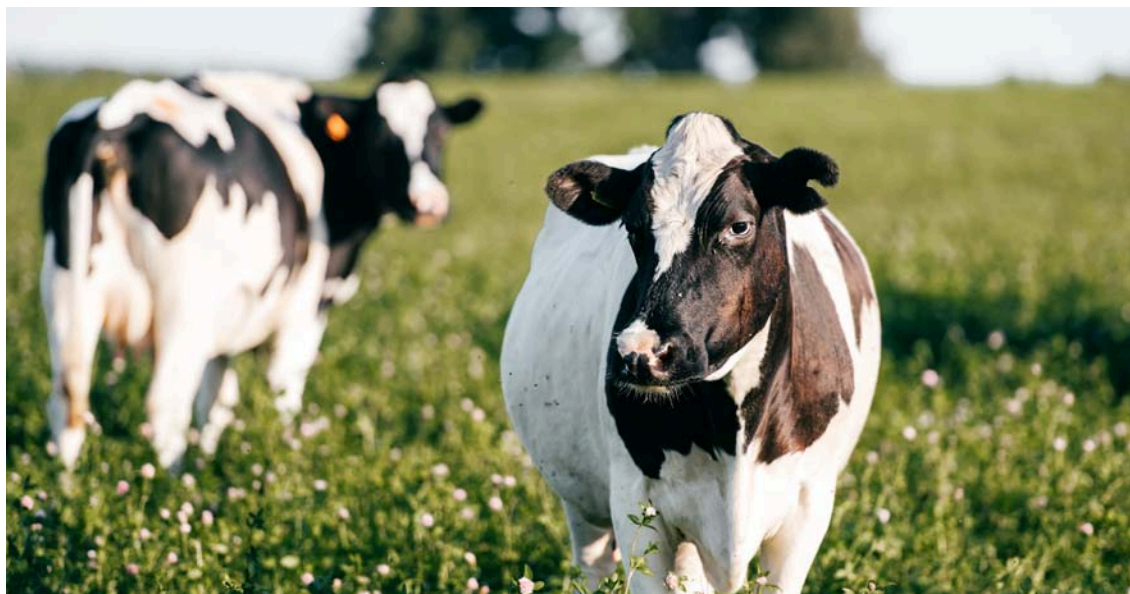
Bovine warts are the ire of cattle producers. These unsightly masses typically appear on the head, neck and body of the animals. Although these masses are usually more of a cosmetic issue than a medical concern, they can cause problems for producers. Warts reduce the value of animals through loss in sales, reduced weight gain and loss of milk production. The warts also create havoc with cattle exhibitors since cattle shows bar any animals with contagious conditions from entering the show ring.

Cattle warts are caused by the bovine papillomavirus which is a member of the Papillomaviridae family. BPV is found throughout the world wherever cattle are present. Several different genotypes of BPV have been found.

Most of the genotypes are species specific which means cattle warts are not contagious to other species like humans. A few exceptions have been found. For example, BPV can infect horses resulting in equine sarcoid tumors.

Transmission of the virus occurs when the virus enters the skin through some type of abrasion or wound. This can be accomplished through direct contact between animals. It can also be spread by contact with objects contaminated with the virus. Some research indicates the possibility of insect transmission.

While some cattle are infected with BPV and never display any clinical signs of the disease, those that do show clinical signs are usually found in cattle less than two years of age. BPV is associated with cutaneous papillomas or fibropapillomas. A papilloma is a lobulated benign tumor arising from the skin. A fibropapilloma is a papilloma containing a large amount of fibrous tissue. Typi-



While some cattle are infected with BPV and never display any clinical signs of the disease, those that do show clinical signs are usually found in cattle less than two years of age. (Courtesy photo)

cally, the warts have a cauliflower appearance or are round, hairless, raised areas on the skin. The skin tumors can be found all over the body. If warts are found in certain areas such as the prepuce, penis, vaginal area, or teats, problems with reproduction, milking or bleeding may occur. Secondary bacterial infections can also be a problem in cattle with warts. Tumors associated with BPV involving the gastrointestinal tract have been found in cattle. The masses are found on the mouth, tongue, esophagus, and digestive tract. The tumors are normally benign unless the animal is immunocompromised. In other countries, BPV has been associated with bladder cancer. These cattle typically consume large amounts of bracken fern, are immunocompromised and are infected with BPV. Bracken fern is not typically eaten by cattle in the United States.

Following an immune response, most warts spontaneously regress in a few months. However, due to their unsightly nature, many cattle producers want to get rid of

the warts as fast as possible. This has led to a variety of treatments. Practices such as feeding cattle the crushed pieces of the wart, pinching off the warts and applying different types of topical treatments have been tried.

Unfortunately, very few if any of the above-mentioned treatments have been scientifically studied, so recommendations are based on experience and opinions. Cattle producers should consult with their veterinarian for the best treatment options.

Prevention of warts requires producers to follow biosecurity protocols. Never introduce an animal with warts to the herd.

If any animal in the herd develops warts, the animal should be isolated and returned to the herd only after it is completely healed. Also, keep all areas of the ranch clean. Especially, sanitize areas where cattle have contact such as feed bunks, water troughs, and places where cattle might rub or scratch.


Commercial vaccines are available. Vaccine failure may occur if

the strains of the virus in the vaccine do not match the strain causing the infection. To avoid this issue, cattle producers may want to have a vaccine developed by a laboratory with a specific strain. This can be accomplished with the help of a veterinarian.

Fortunately, if producers are patient, warts will spontaneously regress in time. If producers cannot wait, they should consult with their veterinarian for the best treatment options.

For those producers that have problems with warts every year, a vaccine should be considered. If producers would like more information on bovine papillomavirus, they should consult with their veterinarian and/or Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension County Agriculture Educator.

References

Bocaneti, Altamura, G., Correggio, A., Velescu, E., Roperto, F., & Borzacchiello, G. (2016). *Bovine Papillomavirus: New Insights into an Old Disease. Transboundary and Emerging Diseases*, 63(1), 14–23. 

Diamond W Corrals

Diamond W Corrals has unveiled Cow-Calf Corrals with Expanders



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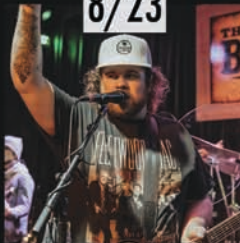
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Freedom an' Whisky

By Nikolyn Williams

I usually spend most of my summers down here in the canyons picking wild plums and making jelly. Due to this pain in the rear drought we are having, grass is short, and the plums didn't make.

I'm having to resort to learning how to make mesquite bean jelly. The mesquites are plentiful in the canyon.

While they are good to barbecue on, they are a huge nuisance. They suck up large amounts of water, which we no longer have an unlimited supply of, so there's that.

I have had a hate relationship going on with the mesquite tree for years, so this is a downright insult for me.

However, the longing I have to be outdoors, harvesting something wild and making it into a new creation, far outweighs the insulting blow my ego has to take, from lowering myself to picking mesquite beans. That is just who we are, isn't it?

Ranch folk are always resorting to plan B, aren't we? I may not like picking mesquite beans, and they are certainly not the red jewel of the canyon the wild plums are, but it is what we have this year, and I'll just have to make do because it's going to be a stretch to drive anywhere, with fuel like it is.

I'm just glad Woodrow has a good string of young horses coming up, because we are about to have to park "Big Red," my gas hog of a Chevrolet, indefinitely.

However, those darn mesquite trees have a bumper crop of beans on them despite this drought. I'm thinking about trying to cross them with a plum bush, or boiling them down and seeing if "Big Red" will run off of them. I sure wish it would rain.

Love always, Nikolyn. 



Due to the drought, grass is short and the plums didn't make. (Photo courtesy Metro Creative)

What Will Develop for the 2022 Rodeo Season?

By Phillip Kitts

Will the rodeo season of 2022 stand up to the thrilling finishes we saw in 2021?

The truth is it is really hard to tell how the 2022 season will play out. There are so many variables that can drastically change the season. Things like injuries, a bad run, or just bad luck, can truly shake up the standings.

As we roll over halfway through the year and with only a couple months left in the season the stories of the year are truly coming to the surface.

We will use this time to breakdown who currently is looking to make a big impact in each event.

There is not a whole lot of surprise in bareback. Jesse Pope has continued to make a statement. With two average wins in two years at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, not many are surprised to see Pope leading the bareback standings by a significant amount.

The rest of the top three are also not much of a surprise. Clayton Biglow and Cole Reiner are both proven athletes but they have a steep hill to climb in order to catch Pope. One name not talked about here who very well could have an impact is Rocker Steiner. He has continued to make a statement even with battling an early season injury.

Steer wrestling is another event without surprise, Hunter Cure continues his charge to the top. In this event the margin is much less significant. Tyler Waguespack and Tristan Martin are both in striking distance and will, without a doubt, have a say in how the end of the season plays out.

Tie Down roping has a new name at the top of the list but not a name new to winning. John Douch made his first NFR last year and has carried the momentum into 2022. The fact is Douch's lead is



It is really hard to tell how the 2022 season will play out. There are so many variables that can drastically change the season.



There is just so much that may happen in the coming months but one thing is for sure. When the 2022 rodeo season closes out it will be exciting. (Photos courtesy Phillip Kitts, Avid Visual Imagery Rodeo Photography)

not one that he can sit back on his laurels, both Shad Mayfield and Marty Yates are not far behind and will put the pressure on.

In breakaway a new, but not

unknown, group is making a push toward a big year. Erin Johnson sits on top while Kelsie Domer and Martha Angelone are both making their own run for the title.


Saddle bronc is another event where the names leading are not unfamiliar. Sage Newman sits on top of the heap while Stetson Wright and Brody Cress have their work cut out for them to catch him. There are some notable names not being represented but there is no question that as the year gets later this list will most likely shuffle.

With all of the activity in team roping this is the one event that currently has very little surprise, last year's world champion team of Driggers and Nogueira continues their reign on the top of the heap.

On the header side Clay Tryan continues to have a good 2022 while on the heeling side, Jake Long is doing the same. The one team that may have a lot to say this season is the same team that had a stellar 2021 NFR. Ward and Hawkins are quietly in striking distance and very well could make a big statement by the end of the year.

Barrel racing standings are truly a 'who is who' in the sport. Jordan Briggs carries her world title run into the 2022 season and sits in first. Not far back the familiar name of Hailey Kinsel and Wenda Johnson will undoubtedly put pressure on the top spot as the season unfolds.

Bull riding may be the biggest shocker of the year. With multi-time world champ Sage Kimzey out because of injury we could see a new name claim the title. In reality the very familiar name of Stetson Wright looks to hold the top spot but not far behind him Josh Frost is positioning himself at a run for a title.

So there it is, what looks to be developing for 2022. As stated, there is just so much that may happen in the coming months but one thing is for sure. When the season closes out it will be exciting. 

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Cowboy Coy

By Krista Lucas Wynn

These days, it can be hard to find wholesome television shows that can interest a broad range of viewers and be appropriate for all ages at the same time. Enter The Ultimate Cowboy Showdown, airing on The INSP Network.

Hosted by country music superstar, Trace Adkins, the premise has top cowboys and cowgirls from across the country compete in different challenges each week, all vying to win \$50,000 worth of cattle, an Arrowquip Q-Catch Cattle Chute, a Heeler Portable Corral, a brand new belt buckle, and of course bragging rights. Think Survivor, cowboy style.

In Season 3, Coy Melancon battled it out with 13 other contestants to become the Ultimate Cowboy. Melancon grew up in Devers, Texas, where he learned his cowboy ways from Brett Hall and others.

"The show was something I wanted to do after I watched the first season. I knew I could go on it and be successful," Melancon said. "I just applied on Facebook one night. Then, for the next few months it was phone calls, Zoom meetings and training."

Filming took about three weeks, and Melancon embodied what a true cowboy is throughout the process. He developed a solid strategy to survive by quietly scouting out the competition, working as a team player and stepping up to be the leader when necessary. By doing so, he quickly became the one to watch for. He also had a top-notch ranch horse with him named Big John.

"Big John is an all around horse," Melancon said. "He belongs to Coby Elliott, owner and operator of Elliott Cattle Company in Hull, Texas. You can literally do anything on him. He's all motor when you need it and a great



Coy Melancon - Ultimate Cowboy Showdown winner. (Courtesy photo)

listener if you're checking new country. He was one of the best, nicest horses on the show. I'll stand toe to toe with any one of them to prove that. He'll carry you to hell and back if you ask nicely."

His experience in Wyoming is one he will not soon forget. Melancon and his peers stayed at the Powderhorn Ranch, outside of Douglas, Wyo., where the competition was filmed.

"I've vacationed in Wyoming but never worked there. I was excited to see new country and the challenge of being out of my element in the mountains," he


said. "I feel that helped push me through to the end. The people at the Powderhorn are the best people in Wyoming. They were down to earth and were servants of the Lord."

Navigating his way through the show presented plenty of challenges, but Melancon kept up a hard work ethic even when winning multiple immunity buckles. Each week, there was a special challenge where whoever came out on top was safe from elimination for the week.

Then, Adkins would pick who to send home, with help from judges, professional rodeo cow-

boy Cash Myers, and respected cattleman and horse trainer Buddy Schnauffer.

The finale came down to Melancon and two other cowboys, Stephen Yellowtail and Jamon Turner, who finished second and third respectively. Melancon still occasionally keeps in touch with Yellowtail, as well as Sarah Foti who was sent home during episode seven.

Melancon became the Ultimate Cowboy by sticking to what he knows and the cowboy code. To keep up with Melancon's future endeavors, follow him on Instagram at Coymelancon_.

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Equine Ocular Disease Part 1

Corneal Ulcers

By Dr. Garrett Metcalf, DVM

Corneal injuries in horses are a very common occurrence and account for many visits to veterinary practices. These injuries should be taken very seriously because corneal ulcers can get out of control very quickly leading to the need of surgical intervention, hospitalization and added expense.

Corneal ulcers are likely something that every horse owner will deal with at some point. The cornea is the clear transparent tissue on the outside of the eye. The tissue is transparent because it has no blood vessels or blood supply. The cornea gets nutrients from the fluid in the eye and the tears.

The equine cornea is only 1.0 to 1.5mm thick. The definition of a corneal ulcer is an open sore on the cornea.

This is when the outermost layer of the cornea is disrupted and allows exposure of the other corneal layers leading to infection. Corneal ulcers can be caused by scratches, blunt trauma, lacerations, or micro abrasions from pieces of hay leading to infection.

Corneal ulcers can also be created solely by pathogens such as virus and fungi, but often the pathogen is allowed into the deeper layers of the cornea through breaks in the glassy smooth outermost epithelial layer of the cornea. These bacteria and fungi are everywhere in the environment and on the horse's skin.

It is important to note that the sooner the eye is treated with the appropriate antibiotic or antifungal the sooner the pathogen will be destroyed and the eye will heal. That is why treating even the smallest corneal injuries sooner rather than later is recommended



by veterinarians.

Signs of a Corneal Ulcer

Horses with a corneal ulcer will display signs of pain coming from the eye by squinting and tearing. They may also display signs of light sensitivity when in direct sunlight. Some horses will also rub their eyes on their legs in an attempt to get relief from the pain.

Diagnosing an Ulcer

Diagnosis is usually a straightforward process. Often, horses are in so much pain from corneal ulcers they will require sedation and local anesthesia to allow the best examination of the cornea and other parts of the eye.

Horses have extremely strong eyelid muscles, and by blocking them with a local block it will make opening the eyelids effortless and allows a more thorough exam. After the eye is examined with an ophthalmoscope, the cornea will be stained with a stain called fluorescein. The stain is

green and will not stick to the glassy outer layer of the cornea but only the deeper layers indicating a break in the first layer.

More advanced testing is sometimes necessary based on the severity of the ulcer. Cytology and culture tests can help identify what pathogen is causing the problem and how to better treat the issue.

Medications and Methods of Delivery

Ointments are probably the most commonly prescribed topical eye medication and are available for a variety of different antibiotics.

These medications need to be applied directly into the eye by holding the eyelids open and depositing them on the cornea or into the inner part of the lower eyelid. Applying ointments is usually not a problem in a well minded horse but even the best horses that are in serious pain can make this difficult to achieve multiple times a day.

Another method to help ease

the difficulty of applying medication and to increase success of treating the eye, is a subpalpebral lavage line. This line is a device that is pierced through the upper or lower eyelid and can be attached to the horse near the mane.

A port similar to an IV injection port is used to allow delivery of antibiotic ophthalmic solutions through the line all the way back near the withers of the horse eliminating the need to mess with the horse's painful eye. By using these lines owners and veterinary staff can more safely and consistently deliver eye medication without the worry that the medication never made it into the eye.

Often owners will have some eye ointment lying around the barn or in the medicine cabinet they are tempted to put in a horse's eye with the first sign of an issue. This can lead to further worsening of the situation especially if the medication has steroids mixed in with the antibiotics.

It is wise to refrain from applying anything into the eye unless further advised from a veterinarian. It is also helpful that no medication be in the eye before it is examined so that the fluorescein test is not disrupted by the presence of medication in the eye before the veterinarian gets to examine the ulcer.

Another key component to managing a corneal ulcer is to control the pain and discomfort that it causes. Ulcers are rather painful and the mainstay of pain management is with NSAIDs, and the one of choice for ocular pain is Banamine. There are available topical pain medications that can be administered into the eye as well but are not as helpful in horses



Corneal ulcers are likely something that every horse owner will deal with at some point. (Photos courtesy of Dr. Garrett Metcalf)

es as they are in other species. A benefit of keeping the pain under control also makes the horse more compliant to allow treatment. It can be extremely difficult to get eye ointment in a horse's eye when they are extremely painful and resistant to any pressure applied to the eye.

Melting Corneal Ulcers


This is the worst form of corneal ulcers because of how rapidly they progress and destroy the corneal layers. The cornea is destroyed by enzymes that the bacteria produce that break down the collagen within the second and thickest layer of the cornea literally melting within hours. These are the most serious corneal ulcers and can lead to loss of the eye.

Surgical Treatment

Ulcers that do not respond quickly enough to medical treatment, or when the ulcer continues to worsen despite aggressive treatment, require surgical interven-

tion. Surgical techniques to save the cornea are aimed at removing the damaged corneal tissue, promoting healing and bringing a direct blood supply to the corneal tissue.

Some of these techniques utilize conjunctival grafts or even corneal replacement grafts. Also, another tissue graft that can be used to heal the cornea more quickly and provide stability is with amniotic tissue. Amnion is the membrane that surrounds a fetus and is part of the placenta.

Ocular injuries and corneal ulcers are a rather serious situation and need to be examined as soon as possible by a veterinarian. The loss of vision or an entire eye can be detrimental to the horses' ability to perform as intended and can lead to safety issues for a rider and the horse. Corneal ulcers are a very treatable condition, and it is always best to begin treatment as soon as possible. 

TOUGH ENOUGH FOR BISON TOUGH ENOUGH FOR CATTLE

We met up with Brock Toler with Back Forty Bison and asked him a few questions about his opinion on the effectiveness of the Lewis Cattle Oilers. Brock is the ranch manager for Back Forty Bison near Dadeville, MO. Brock was skeptical, at first, on the durability of the Oilers. "Bison are notorious for tearing things up....flipping things over....To bison, everything's a toy! To this date, they haven't tipped one over! The durability has really been surprising". The biggest thing that Brock loves about the Oiler is the efficiency.

"In the bison industry, the oiler pays for itself in one year"

-Brock Toler, Back Forty Bison

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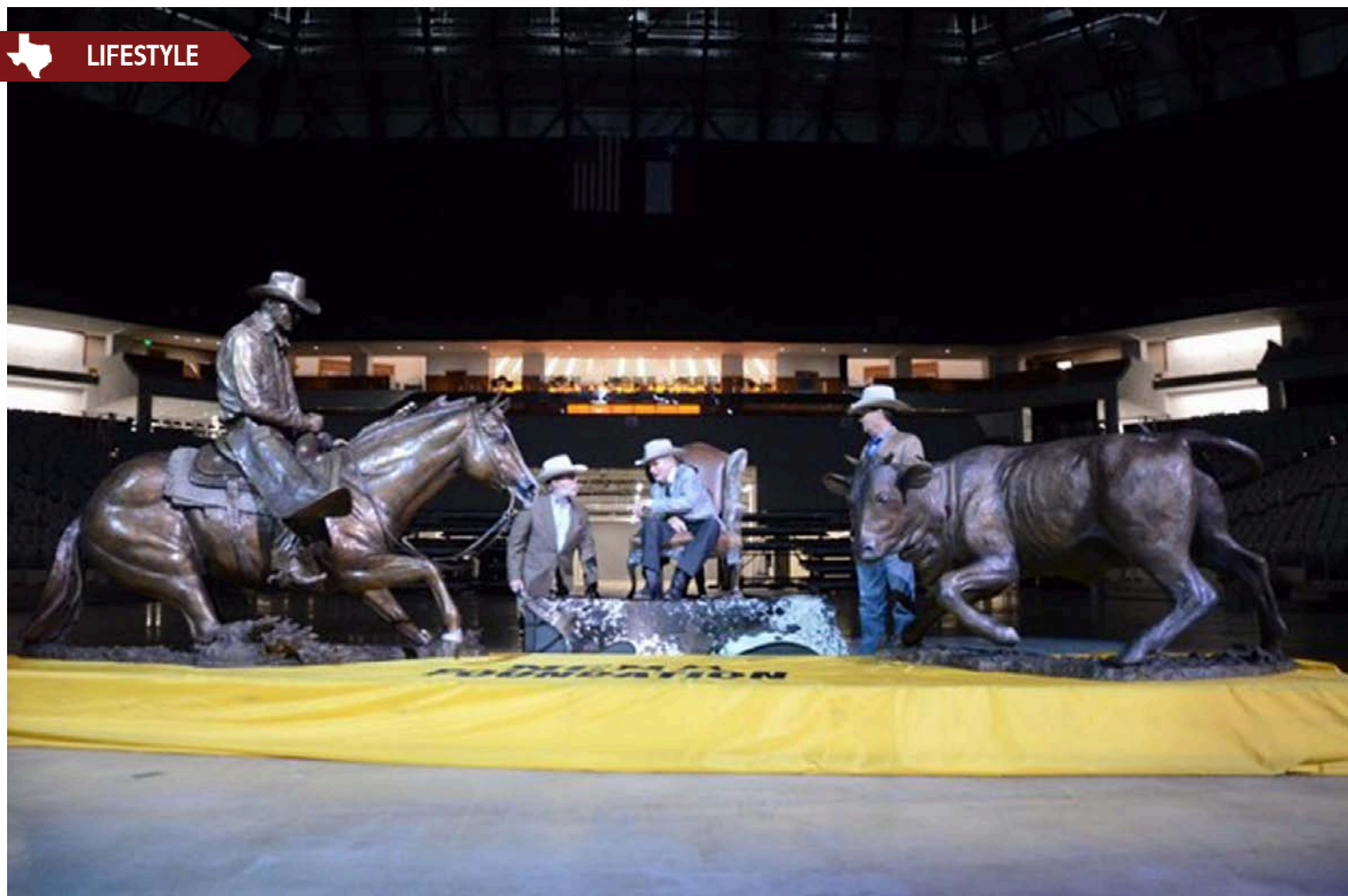
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The greatest tribute to Buster Welch is the larger-than-life bronze of Welch riding Peppy San Badger that was unveiled at the NCHA Finals. (Courtesy photo)

Farewell to Buster Welch

By Judy Wade

The world of cutting horses lost a legend when Buster Welch passed away Sunday, June 12 in Abilene. He was 94.

Welch was one of 10 men who conceived the National Cutting Horse Association. He won the first edition of the Futurity title in 1962, again in 1963, 1966, 1971, and 1977.

Though his lifetime career earnings came in at 1.7 million, his achievements in the sport of cutting and his influence in ranching far exceed the amount of money he won. He won his first NCHA Open World Championship riding Marion's Girl in 1954 and again in 1956. He would go on to win two more titles riding Mr. San Peppy, in 1974 and 1976, whom

he trained for the King Ranch and rode the horse into the history books.

Welch's early life was not an easy one. He was the last of eight children born to Charles Owen Welch and Fay Lucas Welch in Sterling County, Texas. Before he was a month old, his mother died, and he was raised by grandparents until his father remarried. At age 13, he ran away from home and worked on several ranches including the 6666. It was there he met and married Sheila Morris, who also rode cutting horses.

Welch developed styles of saddles and tack that are still used by many cutters today. He also saw Brangus as the best type for cutting and encouraged ranchers

to breed Brangus. Welch took horses coast to coast to cuttings as well as putting on schools for those wanting to learn the sport, gathering more winnings along the way.

Though possessing only an eighth grade education, Welch was a voracious reader and a life-time learner. He was always eager to offer advice and suggestions to others. He was honored to be asked to be invited to be in several episodes of the show "Yellowstone." A few of his accolades include:

- Five time winner of the NCHA Futurity.
- Won his first NCHA Open in 1954, again in 1956 and two more times.

- National Golden Spur Award.
- Foy Proctor Memorial Cowman's Award.
- Zane Schulte Award.
- Charles Goodnight Award.
- Western Horseman Award.
- Trailblazers Award.
- American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame.

The greatest tribute to Welch is the larger-than-life bronze of Welch riding Peppy San Badger that was unveiled at the NCHA Finals. It stands in front of the Will Rogers Coliseum in Fort Worth.

The family asks donations in Welch's honor be directed to the NCHA Foundation in Fort Worth or the Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock.

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PROFILE



Tricia Butler
PHOTOGRAPHY

Ginger Duke

PROFESSIONAL TRICK RIDER



Power. Grace. Fearlessness. Strength. Those are just a few of the words that come to mind when watching the death-defying stunts performed by trick riders and their equine partners.

Ginger Duke, lead performer for “The Dynamite Dames,” is one of the best in the business, leaving audiences breathless with her stunning, adrenaline-packed routines that display her abilities as a professional trick rider, roman rider and liberty horse trainer.

Duke grew up in Granbury, Texas, doing gymnastics and eventually cheerleading at both the high school and college level. She did not begin trick riding until she was 19 years old, when she bought

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**Continued from page 31**

her very first horse and quickly fell in love with riding.

“When I was in college, I decided I was getting a horse, and I did,” Duke recalled. “I joined a group that did drill and trick riding, and that’s where it began.”

Duke’s background in gymnastics and cheer provided her with the skills needed for trick riding, such as body positioning and control. Combined with her passion for horses and strong work ethic, her transition into trick riding was seamless.

“There really wasn’t a difficult part for me. I just think I had a passion for it, and I put my mind to it, and that’s just how it was going to be. I succeeded in setting my goals, applying them, and carrying out every goal I had,” Duke explained.

She also had the opportunity to learn from the late JW Stoker, a member of the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame, who built a career in trick riding and trick roping that lasted more than seven decades.

“He was an incredible trick rider and trick roper in his day,” Duke said. “I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to learn from one of the greatest. The trick rider I am today is because of him. He completely took me and molded me into what I am now.”

After attending the University of North Texas where she studied radio, television and film, Duke settled in the Parker County area, where she has expanded her career into what it is today. She has been a Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association cardholder since 2006, claimed the 2007 Will Rogers Wild West Expo Trick Riding title, is a four-year participant in the Tournament of Roses Parade and Equifest, has performed at Road to the Horse, the Wild Mustang Trick Rider for 2011 and 2012 at the Extreme Mustang Makeover, Project Cowgirl in 2012, and is the 2018 North

Continued on page 34



Ginger Duke, lead performer of “The Dynamite Dames,” leaves audiences breathless with her stunning, adrenaline-packed routines that display her abilities as a professional trick rider, roman rider and liberty horse trainer. (Photo courtesy Tricia Butler Photography)

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- 40- Red Angus Fall calving cows 3 to 5 year olds bred to Angus bulls. Start calving 9-15-22
- 120- Brangus Fall calving cows 3 to 5 year olds bred to Angus and Charolais bulls. Start calving 9-15-22.
- 43- Angus Spring calving 3 to 5 year old cows bred to Hinkson and Schilling Ranch Bulls to start calving 2-10-23.
- 45- Brangus Spring calving 3 to 5 year old cows bred to Hinkson and Schilling Ranch Bulls to start calving 2-10-23.



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After a near-death experience four years ago that put her in the hospital for 30 days with a two-week stint in the ICU, Ginger Duke is back in the saddle, performing to the delight of audiences worldwide. (Photo courtesy Tricia Butler Photography)

Continued from page 32

American Open Women's Trick Riding champion, among many other accomplishments.

Duke remains on the road from March through October as she performs for audiences across the country, with the majority of her work in Texas and Georgia. Duke even lives in Georgia for half of the year where she does movie work.

"There are a ton of film studios in the Atlanta area. They hire us for our horses a lot because ours are so quiet after being rodeo horses. So, we go back and forth quite a bit between Texas and Georgia," Duke said of her busy schedule.

While much of her work remains in those two states, Duke has traveled the world through

trick riding. Her horses have flown to Sweden to perform, as well as to Nebraska, Kansas, Canada, and Alaska, just to name a few. She has gained many life experiences through the people she has encountered.

"You meet so many different people from so many different walks of life. I love trick riding. I love my horses, but it's a package deal getting to travel and meet people," Duke pondered. "Getting to interact with others and become pretty much family with them is the cherry on top. You get so many opportunities you wouldn't have had otherwise."

A trick rider does not perform alone. Her horse must be fast, athletic and talented, too, while also having a calm disposition. The pair form a partnership based on

trust because otherwise, both are at risk of injury and failure. When it comes to the horses, Duke has had several equine partners who have done their job well. Her very first horse, now retired at the age of 24, goes by the name of Tee Jay.

"He was a natural at anything I asked him to do. Honestly, he's probably the reason I stuck with trick riding because he was so solid and consistent. He loved it so much. Knowing it was getting time to retire him was super tough, because you get in a comfort zone, especially with trick riding," Duke said. "We had a very big bond. We were thick as thieves, so it was really hard to switch off him, and I had to force myself one day to just not put him on the trailer."

Fortunately, Duke had several other horses she had ridden

whom she trusted, including a buckskin mustang named Who. Duke thought he would be her partner for years to come until she received a phone call from one of her young students in Canada. Her horse had been killed in the pasture, and with multiple shows already booked and no horse, she asked to buy the mustang. It was a hard decision for Duke to sell Who, but the horse and young rider have thrived together in roman riding, liberty tricks and trick riding.

"It just makes your heart happy knowing you can send your horse down the road, if need be, and they can be just as solid with someone else as they are with you," Duke said.

Duke also owns a mustang named Dollar, a solid animal



many young girls have learned on, but Duke's main performance horses are Cuss and his brother, Cobalt. Cuss was originally purchased by Duke and her brother as a resale project, but when she made the decision to sell Who, Duke decided to trick ride on him after all.

"I called my brother up and asked if we could keep him a little longer and if he minded if I trick rode on him. He said, 'Of course not, he's a pretty phenomenal horse.' The whole family had already fallen in love with this horse, so it didn't hurt anyone's feelings when we decided to keep him. I took him out to the pen and did five tricks that day, took him to the big arena the next day, and I have been riding on him ever since," Duke said.

Duke also owns a small mustang named Kitty Cat and rounding out the team is a one-eyed mustang named Dreamer.

However, it is Cobalt who Duke shares a special bond with because of their shared near-death experiences. Before Cobalt was broke, he had become very ill and almost died. Around that same time, Duke herself had a similar occurrence, after being kicked in her stomach by a horse she was training. She would spend 30 days in the hospital, including a two-week stint in the ICU and six months with a feeding tube and an additional tube for fluid from her pancreas. From the accident, Duke suffered a lacerated pancreas, a hematoma on both sides of her pancreas, a lacerated duodenum, and lost seven inches of her small intestines. After the incident, she was sent to a military hospital in San Antonio, where they performed three surgeries to repair the damage.

"I probably would not have survived if they had not sent me there because they were able to do experiments on me. One of the doctors came in on day two for my third surgery because the first two



Ginger Duke is the lead rider of The Dynamite Dames, who team up to perform fast-paced equestrian acts that include trick riding, roman riding, and opening and closing ceremonies. (Photo courtesy Tricia Butler Photography)

had failed, and he told me he had a dream the night before about how he was going to fix me. They took me to surgery right then," Duke said. "My dad waited at the bottom of the elevator, and when the surgeons came out, they gave him a thumbs up."

The damage to her pancreas is an injury most die from, usually sustained from a car accident. When the pancreas becomes damaged, it is the hardest organ in the body to heal.

"It is a big deal if you have a lacerated liver or kidney, but your pancreas is where your body produces all the bile to break down your food. When you lacerate it, that bile goes into your body cavity. It's very acidic and will kill you," Duke explained. "It was an excruciating experience, but you know, we say everything happens for a reason. I got a call two years

ago and doctors asked if they could publish my surgery."

Duke learned the surgeons had modified her surgery to be done in the field because the injury she suffered is a common one for soldiers, brought on by explosives. The majority of the time, those soldiers succumb to their injury. Duke was one of the very first to survive a lacerated pancreas, and now the modified version of the surgery performed on her can be used to possibly save many soldiers. It was an experience that changed the lives of others, as well as her own.

"It's not that I wasn't a compassionate person before, but after living in a military hospital for 30 days that includes a burn unit, and where even most of the staff are soldiers, was definitely an experience on its own. Getting to meet the other patients and see

what they go through on a daily basis, that experience changed and molded me into a whole different direction in my life," Duke said.

Initially, her injuries were so severe that doctors informed Duke she would never ride again.

"I just wouldn't take that for an answer, so I was very diligent in my healing process. That way I could ride again, especially trick ride. It was like Cobalt and I were kindred spirits because they would put me on the four-wheeler and take me out to the barn. He was always so gentle with me, especially for being a colt and not being really broke. I had one tube left and I went out to the round pen to him one day, and he passed over to the fence. I wasn't really supposed to ride yet, but I had followed the doctors' orders pretty well. I didn't have a halter or anything on him and I just started petting him, then climbed on him, and eventually laid on him. He was so careful with me. It's like he was aware he couldn't make a wrong move. He never messed with my tube when some of the horses were a little more curious. It's like he just knew because he had been there," Duke said.

It has been four years since Duke's accident, and she is back to wowing crowds near and far. She has even been able to make a difference through her trick riding, including working with foster children in Dallas. She travels with her horses to give the children three full days of fun, letting them pet the horses and performing to the delight of the young crowd. The event is filmed and posted online, which has helped adoption rates for those children skyrocket.

She also maintains a well-rounded program for the young riders in her care. She is the lead rider of the Dynamite Dames, who team up to perform fast-paced equestrian acts that include trick riding, roman riding, and opening and closing ceremonies. If any

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girls want to learn from Duke, they are required to perform with her so she can ensure they practice their new skills in a safe environment. She is a stickler for knowing trick riding is not a craft learned in a single weekend but instead one perfected by being consistent.

"I am teaching them how to trick ride and to survive an accident because, in trick riding, it's not a matter of if, but when, you're going to be in a wreck, and you're going to be strapped to a horse. It is a very, very important aspect of surviving an accident," Duke said.

The riders also obtain many life lessons through trick riding, such as how to budget, care for their horse, be on the road, speak in public, look someone in the eye, and present themselves as a lady.

"We are basically actors on horseback. If something goes wrong, you just have to brush it off and keep going. We have to be happy whether we are or not. I feel like in our program, they learn so many life lessons. I love watching these girls grow up and what they go on to do, even as they go on to college and they're not trick riding anymore. I love seeing those transformations and knowing that I had a positive impact on their life," Duke said.

Unfortunately, many students do not realize how hard it is to make a living in trick riding. By the time fuel is paid, maintenance on trucks and trailers is done, saddles and other equipment are bought and maintained, and the horses are fed and taken care of, all the money made from trick riding is long gone.

"I do it because I love it. I am lucky if I break even. I have other jobs to be able to get me down the road because if I try to survive off trick riding, I would be hungry," Duke laughed. "You might as well do what you love, be a little poor in the process, but be happy. I love getting to hang out with my



Ginger Duke doesn't take trick riding for granted, and plans to enjoy the experience as long as she possibly can. (Photo courtesy Ginger Duke)

girls and trick ride. I love getting to share those experiences with other people. I love getting and giving those opportunities to the girls as well."

Duke, along with her boyfriend, start and train colts for others. They also train and sell their own horses.

In addition, they install Equine Kool, a roof coating that acts as a reflective and radiant barrier to keep horse trailers cooler.

It keeps the horses from overheating going down the road, as well as the living quarters. They take the product on the road, and will often do several trailers in whatever town Duke is performing in.

"We love that it's a job that gives us the freedom to still do what we want to do," Duke said.

It's good for Duke to be able to work in breaks during the day


as needed as well, to maintain her health after her accident, especially considering their days often begin at 4 a.m. and do not end until late in the night after the rodeos are all said and done.

"It can be hard balancing, and it's very hard for me because I have always been someone that is a go-getter. It's probably another one of those reasons it happened. I was always a healthy eater, only drank water, and took care of my body, but I do tend to just go and go and go until I'm sick. After my accident, I had to really learn to listen to my body. It will tell you when you're overdoing it," Duke said. "For me, I'm lucky enough to have friends and a boyfriend that also can help me recognize and see when I have done too much and can take over for me. It is definitely hard, especially when you are a people pleaser and want

to make everyone happy."

As for the future, Duke jokes trick riding is not something you can come back to after another career or do forever.

"I'm just a go-with-the-flow person and I just want to trick ride for as long as I can. Then maybe set some new goals, but while my body will allow, especially after my accident, I'm going to trick ride. You can't take trick riding for granted," Duke said. "We have all these memories that we make. I am that person that when I am 80 years old, I don't want to look back and say, 'I wish I would've done that.' I love what I do and that I get to do it with people I love and share those experiences."

To follow along with Duke's career and a list of upcoming performances, visit dynamitedames.com and follow them on social media. 



Lacey's Pantry

By Lacey Vilhauer

Sweet Zucchini Relish

Total Time: 12 hours | **Servings:** 4 - 5 pints

Ingredients:

12 cups shredded unpeeled zucchini
4 cups chopped onions
5 tbsp canning salt
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
6 cups granulated sugar
2 1/2 cups white vinegar
1 tbsp cornstarch
3/4 tsp nutmeg
3/4 tsp turmeric
1 1/2 tsp celery seed
1/2 tsp black pepper

Directions:

Place the zucchini and onion in a large, non-metallic bowl and sprinkle the salt overtop. Use your hands to evenly mix the salt throughout the mixture. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

The following day, drain the zucchini mixture in a colander and rinse with cool water. Place the zucchini in a dish towel and twist until all the extra moisture comes out. Set aside. Place the chopped bell peppers, sugar, vinegar and cornstarch in a large pot. Add the nutmeg, turmeric, celery seed and pepper. Stir to combine, then add the drained zucchini. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 30 minutes.

Once the cooking is complete, sterilize four or five 1-pint canning jars, pour relish in jars, wipe rims and screw on bands. Place the jars in a canning pot with boiling water and process with the lid on for 10 minutes. Then remove the lid, turn off the burner and wait another 5 minutes before removing the jars. Once cool, make sure all lids are pressed down and sealed before storing at room temperature. ®

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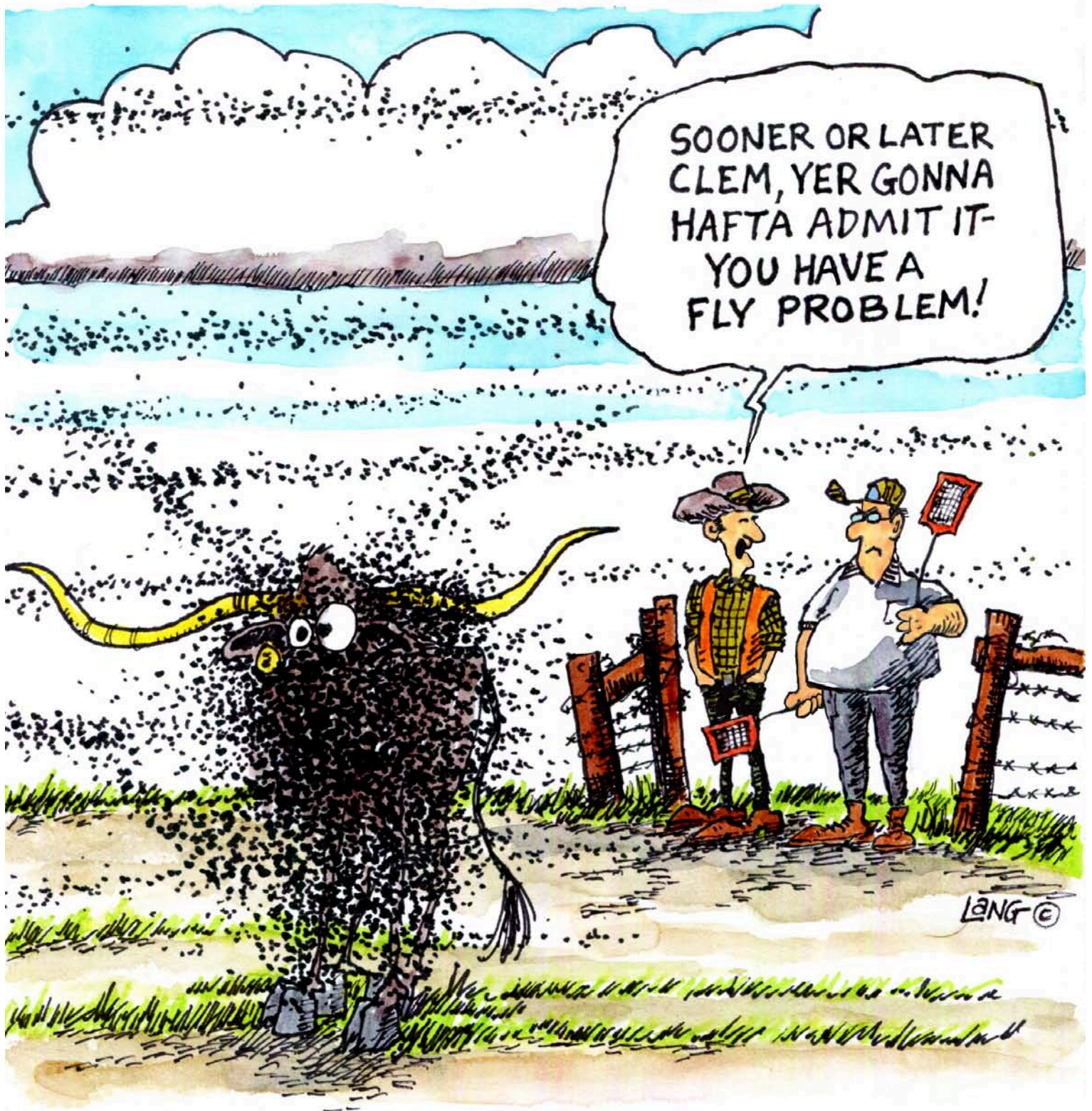
JESSE'S JEWELZ

By Jesse Kader

The struggle is real with the heat rising and trying to stay cool and still look cute. The No Riders tank is a perfect option with the fun graphics and bright colors. It's so cute paired with the duster dress and your favorite accessories. I have a feeling we will be wearing tank tops for a while this year, why not express your fun style at the same time? Find this entire outfit and more at www.jessesjewelz.com. ®



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WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

For the past few years you've been reading stories of my life and perspective as a city girl who transformed into a genuine country loving cattle rancher who's been married to her darling country boy for more than 40 years.

But our daughter could be described as a city girl who grew up country. I thought it would be fun to ask our PhD college history professor daughter to share about her journey from country girl to city girl. So I asked her a few questions.

What are some of your earliest memories about your life on a cattle ranch?

Many of my earliest memories have to do with the animals. I remember our dog Coco coming to the front door and me giggling and managing to say my first word, which was Coco. I remember the birds we had back then: peacocks, pheasants, chickens and ducks. One of my jobs was to help collect the chicken eggs and I remember how dirty the eggs were. The peacocks were loud and made the craziest sounds, but I thought they were beautiful. They are still my favorite bird today.

What's your first memory of what you wanted to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a lawyer for the longest time, but I blame that on Matlock and Law and Order. I considered it as an adult as well, but decided it would not give me the kind of free time I value.

What was it like to grow up living next door to your grandparents?

One word: amazing. I feel so privileged to have had a close relationship with my grandparents, I know many people miss out on that special bond. I have so many early memories with them: driving my little battery jeep up the driveway to their house, eating Bluebell ice cream with vanilla wafers, coloring books and puzzles. Also, the Disney channel! I was very blessed.

What do you admire most about your parents?

Since you phrased this question about my parents as a unit, I will answer it that way. I always have been and am still in awe of your commitment to one another and your love.



Jennifer driving the red tractor on her parents' farm.

After 40-plus years together, and the many ups and downs that come with such a timeframe, y'all are still in love and still growing together. I know firsthand how rare and precious that is. Throughout my growing up years, you didn't hide your relationship from me, which I think is also an amazing gift.

I knew how much you loved each other and I knew when someone was upset, but I also learned how to forgive from watching y'all.

I think too many couples hide both the good and the bad from their kids. How else are we to learn?

What's a funny memory about living in the country?

I'm not sure how funny this is, but it's more about how strange country living is compared to the city. How every morning at the beginning of dove hunting season it sounds like a war zone. To people raised in the country, this



is no big deal, but to anyone else, it would be truly terrifying.

If you could repeat one day from your childhood, what day would that be?

Maybe one of my epic birthday parties. I think it was my eighth or ninth birthday when we had pony rides for all my friends, and water pistol fights. It was a blast and most importantly, everyone I loved was still alive.

How do you think being raised in the country influenced who you are today?

It's hard to say for certain, but I think it gave me a greater appreciation for the little things and the quiet moments. While I prefer the conveniences of a city life, I do not care for a hectic lifestyle. I am someone who takes things slowly and favors quality over quantity. Being raised away from the hustle and bustle, I still need a good amount of quiet, private time in each day to feel content. I definitely think being raised in the country influenced that need.

Whether we were raised in the city or country, our upbringing has undoubtedly influenced who we are today. We can see these influences in obvious and sometimes more subtle ways.



Annette Bridges with her daughter, Jennifer, when she was three years old.

Honestly, I'm still not sure how my city upbringing prepared me for my life in the country. But I am discovering more and more how I have embraced my mamma's strength and



Jennifer at her graduation for her PhD. (Photos courtesy Annette Bridges)

grandmother's courage to tackle doing things that I've never done before. I suspect we would all be surprised by what we are capable of doing if only we tried. 🙌

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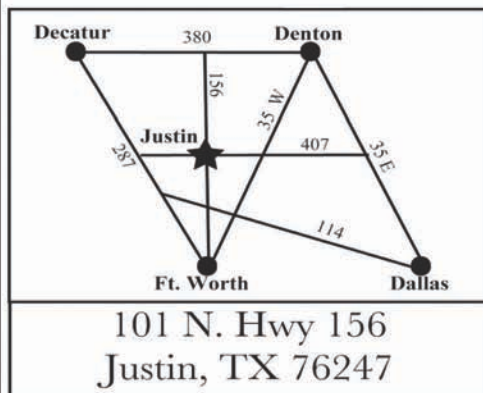


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Horse Fever

Guest submission by Irene Henry

Have you ever seen a sunset while sitting in a saddle?
 Or rode on a good horse to help and gather cattle?
 Did you sit by a river and watch the water flow?
 Just sitting and relaxing with your horse in tow?
 Have you ever seen a newborn foal trying to stand up?
 Or watched it just a few days later playing with the pup?
 Do you know what it is like to have a partner that you trust?
 Together you could win it all or together you will go bust.
 Have you given up shopping trips and buy off a rack?
 So that you might save some money to buy your horse new tack?
 Would you rather be out in the weather cleaning out the stall
 than going out with friends and family for supper at the mall?
 If you have done any of these things then let me say for sure
 that you do have a sickness and that there is no known cure.
 So just accept the fact there is not a pill out there,
 and all that you can do is find those like you to share.
 The love and understanding it takes to be a horse lover,
 there are millions out there who are as sick as you are brother.



Front Porch PERSPECTIVE



By Ann Asher



I admit it. I'm guilty. It starts on Sunday evening when the weekend is winding down, and the realization that the work week is looming.

I start to ponder and fret about all the things I must do, and simply the thought of all the impending


work can dampen my mood.

I've realized I must change my way of thinking and should begin the weeks and/or days with an "I get to" mentality instead of "I have to."

"I get to go to work," or "I get to have a busy day," or "I get to

spend all day working outside instead of in an office." It doesn't matter, because it works for most situations. We often dress our opportunities as stress, but they are, in fact, blessings.

Legendary singer Willie Nelson once said that, when he started

counting his blessings, his whole life turned around. It's not always easy to recognize our blessings, especially when things seem to be falling apart. I implore you, this month, to focus on your blessings, and see if you don't see a change in your life. 



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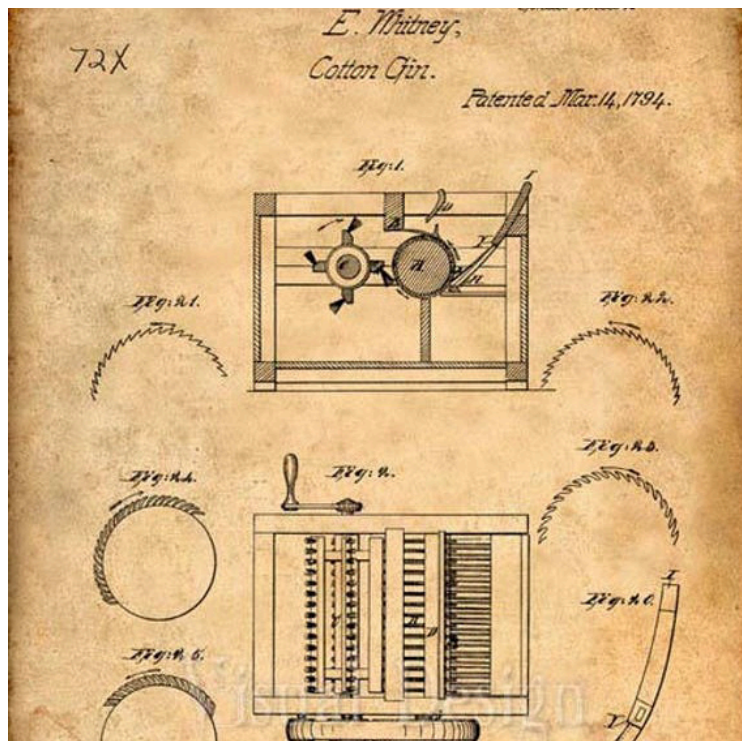
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Inventions of Agriculture: The Cotton Gin

By Dani Blackburn

A few centuries ago, the landscape of farming and ranching looked quite different than it does today. There were no tractors for plowing, airplanes for spraying or even barbed wire for separating cattle. There are inventions that have come along and changed the face of agriculture across the United States. One of those inventions was the cotton gin. It was invented during a time when the agricultural industry was struggling after its most significant crop, tobacco, saw revenues begin to plummet. But while it saved the profits and livelihood of many farmers and plantation owners, it also led to the increase in slave labor, making it an invention that significantly changed both our economic and social past. The cotton gin was invented by Eli Whitney. Whitney was born in Westborough, Mass., on Dec. 8, 1765. His father was a farmer, and his son would prove his talents as both an inventor and a mechanic at a young age.

Whitney graduated Yale University and even considered becoming a lawyer, but life took him down a different path. He made his way to the south after graduation with plans to tutor, but upon arrival, he accepted a position with Catherine Green in Savannah, Ga. Greene was the widow of American Revolutionary War General Nathanael Greene and owned the Mulberry Grove plantation. At the time, tobacco was falling in value due to both soil exhaustion and abundance. Farmers began turning to other crop options, including cotton. Unfortunately, the only variety that could be grown inland contained seeds that were time-consuming to pick out. During the colonial times, cloth derived from cotton was more expensive than wool or even linen due to the difficulty of removing these seeds from the fibers. It took an entire



The cotton gin patent. (Courtesy photo)

day just to detach seeds from one single pound of cotton. Whitney's employer, Greene, urged the young Whitney to find a solution to this problem. Her support was crucial in Whitney's success in inventing the cotton gin. Some even suggest that it was actually Greene who was the true inventor of the cotton gin, but at the time, women were not allowed to apply for patents in the United States.

On March 14, 1794, Whitney succeeded in obtaining a patent for the cotton gin. While similar devices had been around for many years, his was the first single device that could clean short-staple cotton. The introduction of the new technology made cotton a profitable crop in the United States for the very first time. The device worked much like a strainer. The cotton was run through a drum, made of wood, which included hooks similar to teeth along the perimeter. Those hooks caught the cotton fiber and drug them through a mesh, which was too small to

allow the seeds through. However, the hooks pulled the cotton through easily. Small cotton gins could easily be worked by hand, while larger ones included the use of horses to power. Even the smaller gin could remove seeds from 50 pounds of cotton in one day, a much larger amount than the results of doing it by hand. In fact, the gin allowed 1,000 pounds of cotton to be cleaned in the same amount of time it took a worker to do five pounds by hand.

Due to Whitney's invention of the cotton gin, along with other inventions of the Industrial Revolution such as machines to weave it, the price of cotton plunged and production of it doubled each decade after 1800. It even began being shipped overseas, and soon American farmers were growing 75 percent of the world's supply of cotton. But Whitney's invention was not all good news. While it did increase the production and profits of crops in America, it also established the cotton plantation

culture of the south. The cotton crop became so lucrative for plantation owners, the demand to make more significantly increased. As it did, so did the use of slave labor for growing it. As for Whitney, he struggled with patent-law issues that prevented him from significantly profiting from his invention. He managed to overcome that obstacle when he secured a contract with the United States government in 1798 to create 10,000 muskets. While it would take him a decade to make those instead of the two years originally planned in the contract, he began endorsing interchangeable parts. In other words, identical parts could be quickly assembled while making for easier repairs on machines. Many objects, from machines to guns, were constructed by individuals. Whitney is most known for his invention of the cotton gin, but he also is credited for the development of mass production within America. In his personal life, Whitney did not wed until his 50s, when he married Henrietta Edwards in 1817. The pair would go on to have four children before his death on Jan. 8, 1825, at the age of 59.

Resources

History. (2010, February 4). *Cotton Gin and Eli Whitney.* A&E Television Networks. <https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/cotton-gin-and-eli-whitney>

National Archives and Records Administration. (2021, December 16). *Eli Whitney's Patent for the Cotton Gin.* National Archives Educator Resources. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/cotton-gin-patent#background>

Although the author has made every effort to ensure the information in this article is accurate, this story is meant for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for historical documents. NTFR

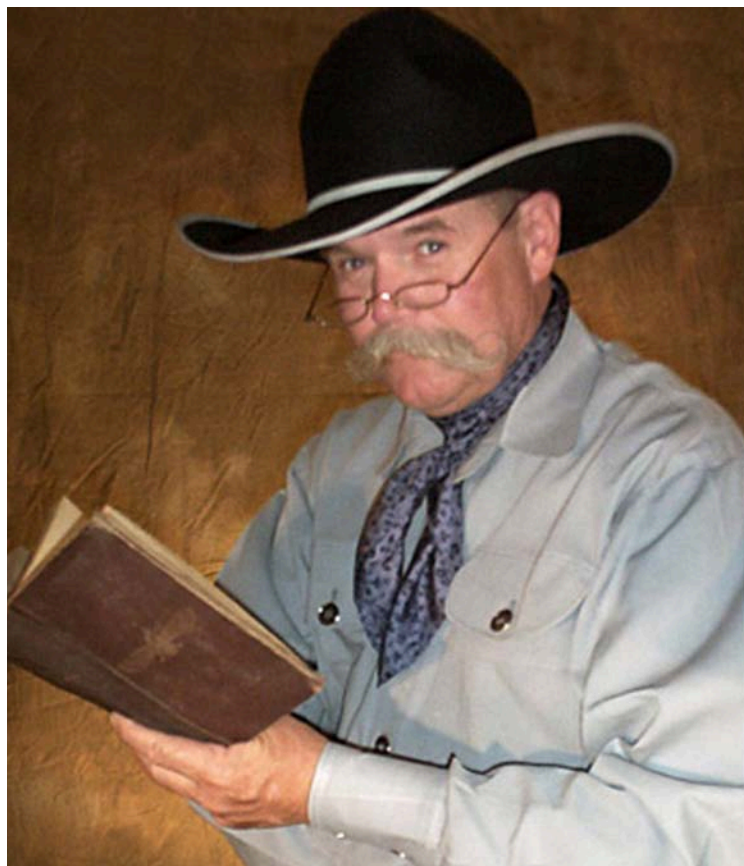


On the Road WITH DAVE ALEXANDER



Cowboy Poetry, A Forgotten Art Form

Photos courtesy Don Kallaus



It seems pretty hard to find a real cowboy these days and even harder to find a western artist known as a cowboy poet.

From his earliest days, Waddie Mitchell was immersed in the cowboy way of entertaining. The art of spinnin' tales in rhyme and meter that soon came to be known as cowboy poetry.

As an early organizer of the internationally known Elko Cowboy

Poetry Gathering, his first public performance was an overwhelming success, thus launching his career as a cowboy poet.

Currently, Mitchell continues to perform and host festivals, private gatherings, rodeos and special events.

Find out more about this amazing artist at <http://somagency.com/waddie-mitchell/>.

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davealexander.com.

Wildfire Readiness: Being Prepared for the Unexpected

By Martha Crump | marthacrump@comcell.net,
Co-contributor Lindal Gillen-Goetz

According to the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service economists, by as early as May of this year, wildfires in Texas had already accounted for the devastation of roughly 433,000 acres of land, at a preliminary agricultural loss of \$23.1 million. Statistics show that people and their activities are responsible for more than 90 percent of all wildfires in Texas, with careless burning of debris the largest human cause of wildfires.

Other causes include, but are not limited to, sparks from welding/grinding equipment, vehicles, improperly discarded smoking materials, hay swathing and baling equipment, mowing equipment, and sadly, arson, to name just a few.

The likelihood is that as we enter into the end of summer with continued high temperatures and sporadic rainfall, wildfires will continue to be problematic throughout the state, and all landowners should be aware of the threats they pose.

Dry conditions, dense vegetation and high winds are all factors in wildfire ignition and spread. The dangers of wildfire include hot gasses, smoke and flames, and as a wildfire grows in intensity and size, so do each of these. Wind speed, temperature and relative humidity must also be factored into the rate of spread. Facing an imminent wildfire danger is not the time to consider what steps should be taken.

Preparations and a plan of action can determine how timely and how well you and your property fare.



According to the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service economists, by as early as May of this year, wildfires in Texas had already accounted for the devastation of roughly 433,000 acres of land. (Photo courtesy Texas A&M Forest Service)



Dry conditions, dense vegetation and high winds are all factors in wildfire ignition and spread. (Photo courtesy Metro Creative)



Local volunteer fire departments/first responders go above and beyond in the face of these unexpected and deadly threats. As landowners, there is quite a lot that we can do to facilitate their success in managing a wildfire. Taking a few moments to develop a checklist is a good starting point for the landowner and can potentially be extremely helpful for the first responders specific to your property.

Most established ranchers have a good working relationship with the local volunteer fire departments around their area, and along the same vein, local VFDs are accustomed to working shoulder-to-shoulder with their neighboring counterparts and pretty much know who has what resources available.

These men and women train on their own time, are certified and on standby 24/7 to be there when they are needed. They do as much as they can, for as long as they can, to protect our interests, be that our land, our homes, our livestock, or anything else to do with our livelihoods.

The landscape of country living is changing dramatically. More people are wanting to escape city living, if not to fully relocate, at least to own property that allows them a getaway from being in town.

The absentee landowners are not always easily accessible during emergencies. Whether you have lived on your place for four or five generations or have recently bought your weekend getaway, it might behoove us all to recap some tips to help ourselves and most importantly, the VFDs that come to our rescue.

M. L. Russell, assistant professor and extension range specialist-ecosystem science and management, developed a checklist with good points for all landowners to consider.

"The answers to the questions below will be instrumental in



building operations, tactics, and general firefighting techniques. A carefully thought out wildfire-ready checklist is an excellent foundation for improved communication and relationship building during wildfires," according to Russell.

Not all will be a consideration for every landowner, but most will find many that are relevant to both small and large holdings alike.

Tactics

How do you manage your fine-fuel forage?

Are you okay with burnout operations to fight the fire?

Are there existing barriers such as roads, fields, bladed areas, caliche pad sites etc., from which to anchor firing operations?

Do you have any concerns about bulldozing the fire edge to bare mineral soil, displacing top soil?

Are you okay with any fence being cut or laid down?

Property at Risk

Are there any high-fenced areas that are prioritized?

Are grazing livestock near the

fire or in the potential path of the fire?

Are there any aggressive exotic wildlife species?

Where are the structures located?

What is the priority of those structures?

Logistics

Do you grant permission to use on-site water to fight a fire?

What are the types of water sources?

What type of access is there to water sources?

What volume of water is available?

How deep are the water sources?

Support

What type of ranch equipment is available to use? (e.g. sprayers or heavy equipment)

Do you have hard copies of aerial imagery or maps with property roads, and gate locations clearly marked?

Do you have gate lock codes? Are all gates on the property already open? If not, are you comfortable sending someone to

facilitate emergency access?

Do you have your neighbor's contact information or gate lock codes?

Do you have absentee landowner neighbors? If so, have you made previous contact with them and exchanged information so that they can be notified and/or asked about access during an emergency?

Hazards

Are there oil and gas lines?

Any report of H2S or other toxic gases on the property?

Are there any rough roads not suitable for responding equipment?

Are there damaged cattle-guards?

Are there any rested pastures with volatile fuel loads?

Are there any deer blinds or outbuildings with propane tanks in them?

Also landowners should always be aware of their county burn bans. Compliance with active burn ban laws do help to reduce unsafe debris burning, but everyone should remember a burn ban does not have to be in effect for outdoor burning to be illegal. If you negligently allow your fire to escape onto someone else's property, it is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

The state of Texas uses a tiered approach to wildfire response. That starts with local fire departments and counties as the first responders and is followed by state response as wildfires or conditions exceed the local ability to control. The Texas A&M Forest Service was implemented in 1915 with the main goal of suppression and extinguishing of forest fires. In 1993, that mission was expanded to include the coordination of response to any large or potentially major wildland fire within the state.

There is a tremendous amount of coordination that is required beginning with the local first

Continued on page 54

Continued from page 53

responder level and growing in magnitude as other agencies are called into action.

The Incident Command System at each of these levels ensures a more coordinated and rapid response and an appropriate use of resources. As landowners/managers, this is where our role becomes critical, especially to our first responders. It is of utmost importance to be able to contact individuals as firefighters need, or as they are attempting to access property to manage wildfires.

The inability to do so is very handicapping. I would encourage all individuals that are living remote from your property to at least make sure that neighboring property owners have a means of contact for you. My experience with folks that are new to either owning a country recreational property, or to being new country living residents, is that there is a certain level of “distrust” that many experience regarding sharing of information about their properties.

I realize that giving gate codes to neighbors might seem counter-intuitive, however, it might mean the difference between suppressing a fire quickly versus having it grow and spread. If you are not comfortable sharing that information with a neighbor, then please share with the local law enforcement office in your area so that someone can contact you.

As a matter of note, country living or land ownership means getting to know your neighbors so that we can all work together to protect everyone’s interests. We cannot help you in your absence if we do not know you or cannot contact you.

As of March 31, 2022, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service in Texas was offering financial assistance to farmers and ranchers that were impacted by wildfires, including



Our local VFDs are effective at what they do in the face of overwhelming conditions. Imagine how much we could help their volunteer efforts by taking the time to do just a little bit of computer work and by compiling a little bit of information like this for them.



Any time your local VFD/First Responders are having a fundraiser, please help support them. We cannot double their wages as they work for free, but we can contribute to coffers that have to be maintained for equipment purchase and repair, fuel, protective equipment for volunteers, and many other costs that most would never think of in regard to keeping these men and women safe and ready to respond. (Courtesy photos)

animal mortality assistance, deferred grazing and more.

According to the state website, "NRCS in Texas is prepared to assist landowners with their efforts to address wind and water erosion, livestock production limitation, degraded plant condition and other resource concerns caused by recent wildfires."

At the time of the above referenced new release, only 15 counties were eligible, but by April 4, 2022, Governor Abbott amended this Declaration to include a total of 82 Texas counties with the potential for more to be added as drought conditions continue and wildfire risks increase throughout the heat of the summer. As of the first of July, that number had grown to include 182 counties.

Having experienced all of this and more, fellow WFACW cattlemaster and co-contributor to this article, Lindal Gillen-Goetz, went through the entire scenario

of wildfire spreading up to the evacuation of her Rafter LL ranch just last summer.

In preparation for this article she spoke at length with Linda Moon, Texas A&M Forest Service communications manager, and was directed to the following sources of information available to homeowners, community members and landowners alike to facilitate condensing of information into a helpful format for first responders.

I strongly encourage everyone to visit this website and follow the links to assist you in preparing for fire should it happen in your area at <https://tfswb.tamu.edu>.

Once you have accessed the webpage, then look for the heading Preparing For Wildfires. Upon selecting that, you will find subcategories called Protect Your Community, Protect Your Home, Protect Your Ranch, and Protect Your Wildlands. Two forms

of interest found under the link Protect Your Ranch, are the Landowner Priorities Form complete with an example of what is listed where and a form called Map My Property that actually enables landowners to not only map their properties but to also denote features of interest/importance on said property.

Our local VFDs are effective at what they do in the face of overwhelming conditions. Imagine how much we could help their volunteer efforts by taking the time to do just a little bit of computer work and by compiling a little bit of information like this for them.

I would respectfully add that any time your local VFD/First Responders are having a fundraiser, please help support them. We cannot double their wages as they work for free, but we can contribute to coffers that have to be maintained for equipment

purchase and repair, fuel, protective equipment for volunteers, and many other costs that most would never think of in regard to keeping these men and women safe and ready to respond.


To that end, may I say God bless and keep safe all of our VFD members/First Responders as they volunteer their time to protect the rest of us.

The next meeting of the WFACW organization will be on August 16 at the Forum, 2120 Speedway, Wichita Falls, Texas. Members attending the midday meeting are encouraged to bring their lunch and enjoy eating and visiting starting at 11:30 a.m., followed by the business meeting at noon.

Article Sources:

<https://tfswb.tamu.edu>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension 



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Included in each story was a fatherly figure, someone who took the time to teach them the basics. (Photo courtesy Metro Creative)

Confessions of a HUNTER

By Andy Anderson

Hunting Is a Sport, Not Sport Hunting

I walk into a local café, the small-town type where the tables don't match, the history of the area covers the walls from floor to ceiling and the smells of fresh hot coffee and home-style cooking fills the air.

The old-timers are gathered at a table in the back of the dining room talking and sharing stories, giving free advice to solving any problem you may have or a salty opinion should you ask for one.

As I find a table, and slide the chair back to have a seat, the waitress sets a coffee cup down and fills it to the brim.

Time seems to slow down; peace sets in as I look over the menu even though I already



know what I'm going to have.

Not too much attention is paid to my presence by the table of patriarchs seated behind me. They glance over at me and carry on with their conversation. Guess I fit the part.

About that time a couple of young men, about 16 years of age, burst into the café. Loud and abrupt as they enter, they just stand in the doorway for a few moments.

The waitress advises they can sit anywhere they like.

A quick glance at the hair on their faces, skinny jeans and tennis shoes, it's obvious they are not from around here.

About that time, a low grumble sounds from the table behind me, "Y'all can sit up front there." The young men sit at the table next to the door minding the advice given.

Shortly afterward I hear the men discussing the wild hog problem in the area, and my name comes up as the helicopter guy. I turn and introduce myself and am quickly invited over to their table.

As we discuss helicopter hog hunting, the young men decide they should advise us that shooting pigs from a helicopter is not hunting,

it's murder. Well, use your imagination as to the response returned their way and about how much anyone cared about their opinion. The young men got the point and soon departed the café.

The conversation turned to one of the differences in hunting the "old way" and this "new way" of hunting.

Helicopter hunting is a depredation program with the goal being to reduce the population of an invasive species.

However, helicopter hog hunting was not the topic of conversation, but how much hunting has changed over the years.

I sat for over an hour listening to various stories of how each man learned to stalk their prey, navigate without maps, and, most importantly, the honor with which each man expressed learning the traditional ways of hunting and fishing and that the old ways are what defined them as men.

There was a sense of pride and boastfulness as they described their first kills and their failures. Included in each story was a fatherly figure, someone who took the time to teach them the basics.


I, too, was taught this way and am sharing it with my son as he grows. I asked from time to time their opinions about the use of technology in hunting: GPS, phones, scopes and range finders.

A few said we have all become too dependent on technology. It has made us weak. The others said if they knew how to use it, they would and didn't have a problem with it.

One thing remained the same, though. Despite the use of technology, skinny jeans or new scopes, the respect of the hunt and of the game remained.

Except for pigs; pigs are not included in this at all. In fact, don't ever bring up saving pigs to ranchers or farmers unless you want a word lashing or worse.

I think we all have fond memories of those who lead the way, and taught us about honor and respect in all aspects of life and the good times.

We are all capable of deviating from that narrow path of righteousness from time to time, but it's what was ingrained in us from those hunting and fishing trips that brings most of us back to the narrow path of life. 

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Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean | tonydean.tx1@gmail.com

Meadow Dropseed

There are all kinds of plants out there on the range. Many of them are good grazing for livestock, but some are not that good. We need to know the difference, and there is a reason why.

Suppose you are looking for some grazing land to lease. You find a pasture that is available, and the owner agrees to meet you for a drive-through of his land. The first thing you notice is a beautiful flowing grass, and you are thinking, "Anything that looks that good has got to be good for livestock."

In North Texas, that grass could be Meadow dropseed. Meadow dropseed is a perennial grass that grows in large dense tufts with flat and narrow leaves up to 24 inches long. These long leaves, when mature, seem to flow with the wind. It may grow as individual plants or as small monocultures but rarely occupies a large amount of the pasture.


The downside is that Meadow dropseed provides only fair to poor grazing for livestock and poor value for deer. The best grazing is in early spring when plants are young and tender, but as the plant matures, the leaves rapidly become tough and wiry. Cut off a small handful of leaves, gather them together in your hands and try to pull them apart. They are almost impossible to tear.

A cow feels the same way as she wraps her tongue around Meadow dropseed. It is just not worth the effort so she goes on to



Meadow dropseed is a perennial grass that grows in large dense tufts with flat and narrow leaves up to 24 inches long. It may grow as individual plants, pictured above. (Photo courtesy Tony Dean)

something more tender. Pastures that are continually grazed during the summer will often show an increased amount of Meadow dropseed due to animal preference for better plants, leaving little pressure on the tough dropseed plants.

This species is best adapted to clay soils. One benefit is it has a deep root system and will reduce erosion where it is grown. 

Grazing Value of This Plant

Meadow dropseed



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- Meadow dropseed leaves are tough and wiry making the grass difficult for cattle to consume.



Meadow dropsseed may grow as individual plants or as small monocultures, pictured above, but rarely occupies a large amount of the pasture. (Photos courtesy Tony Dean)



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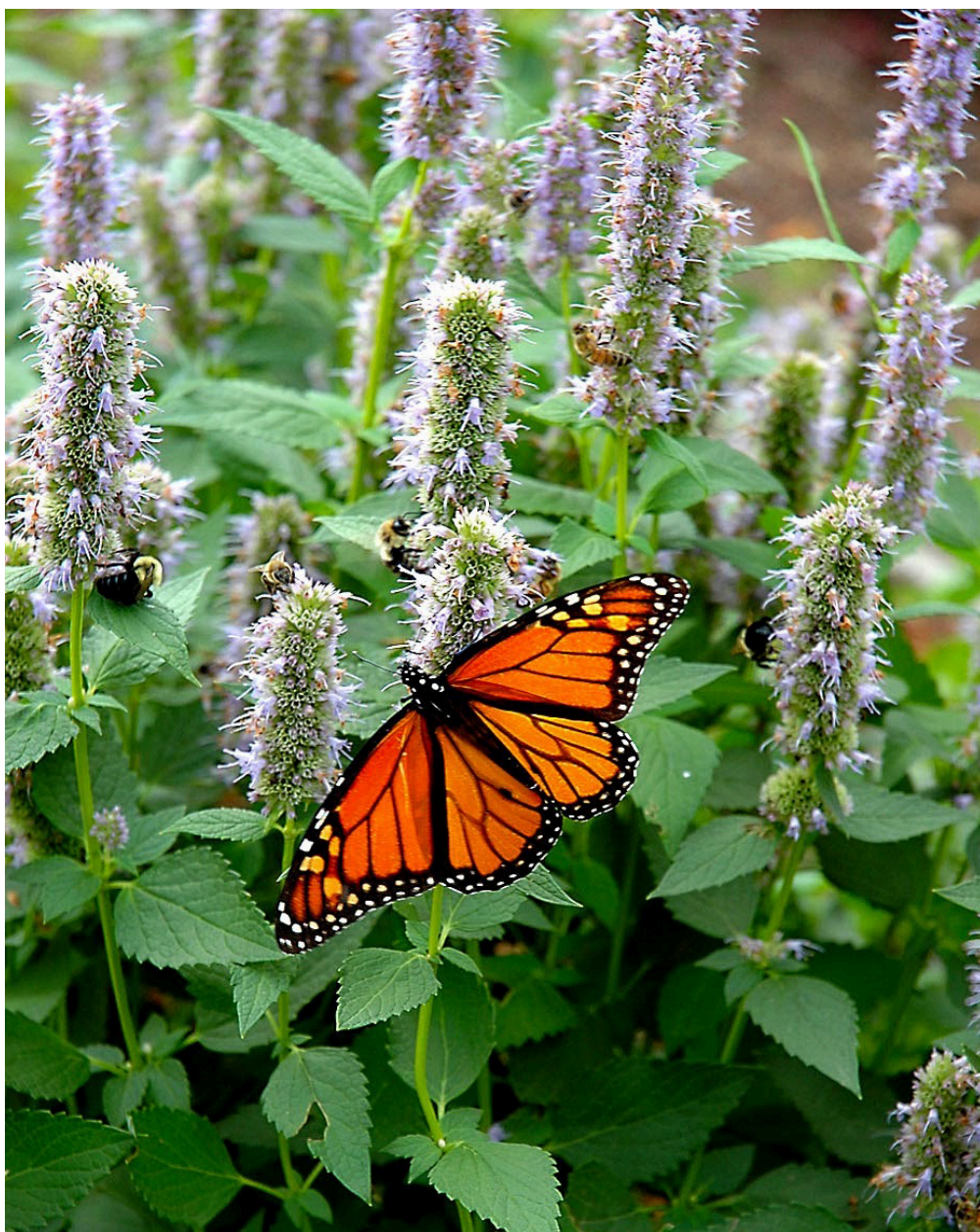
Make Blue Fortune Agastache the Foundation of Your Pollinator Garden

A feeling of euphoria came over 'The Garden Guy' and I muttered to myself that my work on earth was done. Okay, I am kidding to a point. I am trialing two new agastaches, which I admit I am falling in love with. They are Meant to Bee Queen Nectarine and Meant to Bee Royal Raspberry. I'll write about them in the coming months. My moment with a visit down Euphoria Lane, however, came when I went to Proven Winners' Agastache page and saw almost a dozen selections including the one I consider the granddaddy, the foundation of all pollinator gardens worth their salt, and that is Blue Fortune.

My first trials with Blue Fortune was more than 15 years ago when I was an extension horticulture specialist with Mississippi State University. Since then it has been featured in all of my pollinator or butterfly presentations and I have written about it several times. But to be honest it has been like I was speaking in some kind of paranormal vacuum. Oh, you would get to buy one or two ever so often. Pollinator geeks like myself kind of have an inner circle, if you see an agastache for sale, send an alert or pick me one up just in case I never get the chance again. Now with the number one plant brand obviously putting some extra effort toward bees, birds and butterflies with the addition of almost a dozen agastache varieties, the future is bright. Regarding Blue Fortune, now we will all hopefully have the opportunity to buy some. No longer will it be like searching for the proverbial four-leafed clover. Our secret agastache groups can dissolve.

I know there is probably a large group, a new generation of readers, if you will, that are asking what in the world is a Blue Fortune agastache and why would I want one? First know that it is a perennial, cold hardy from zones five through nine. The rest of you can

Continued on page 62



Like a field of dreams this Blue Fortune clump has attracted a Monarch butterfly, bumblebee and honeybee.



Blue Fortune agastache shows out in a garden with lantanas, milkweeds and rudbeckias.

Continued from page 61

grow it as an annual. In addition to the name agastache they also go by names like anise hyssop and hummingbird mints.

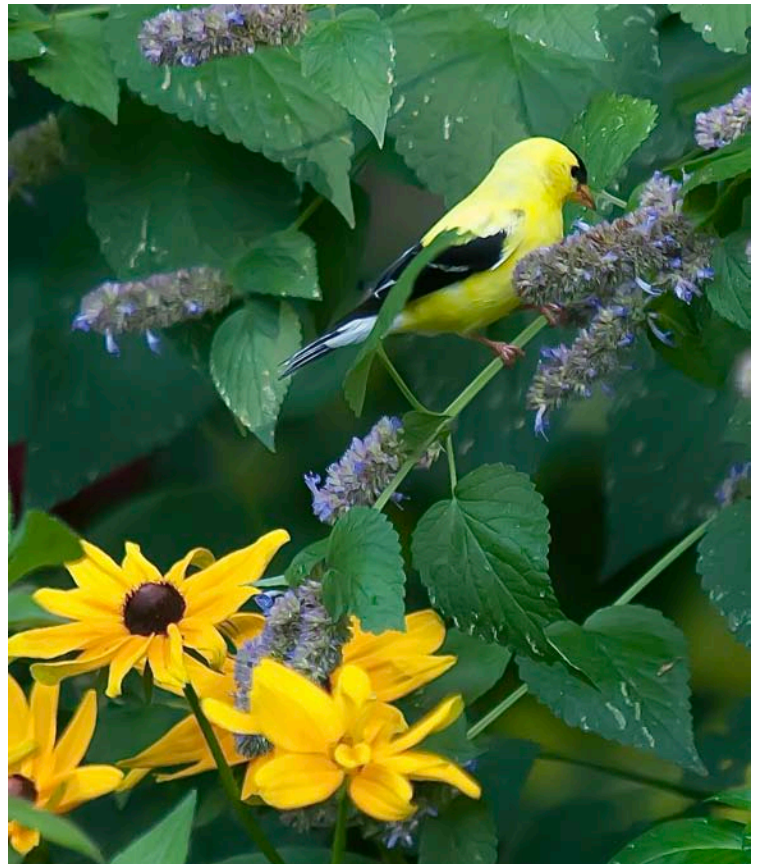
Blue Fortune has native DNA, *Agastache foeniculum*, that was crossed with one of the best outsiders from Korea, *Agastache rugosa*. The result is a super-charged perennial that will yield glorious lavender blue spikes of blooms all season until it is time for winter rest. During this long period of bloom, it will bring in all sorts of bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Then to add to your deadheading quandary, consider that birds like American Goldfinches may come to eat the seeds. They are at my house. It is a one-stop habitat café with a treasure trove of food, none of which is on Bambi's menu.

As far as landscape aesthetics are concerned, the two-foot-tall clump of blue fragrant flower spikes create excitement in the garden with their texture. You

may actually think there is sound associated with the flowers as it will be the hum of bees. The blue color partners well with all other colors of agastaches, and other prized pollinator plants like *Truffula* Pink gomphrena, Rockin salvias and Luscious lantanas.

The Garden Guy does well with Blue Fortune even though I am a little sun challenged. In full blazing sun the blooms and performance are even better. Good drainage is essential for a spring return as wet winter boggy soil will give you problems.

Those of you who are culinary specialists will love the opportunities of using Blue Fortune agastache or anise hyssop in the kitchen. Honey producers consider anise hyssop honey to be among the finest. Pollinator lovers, our future looks bright, with a mega brand taking agastache to a new level. Follow me on Facebook @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy for more photos and garden inspiration. 



As the seeds mature, the American Goldfinches sweep in for their chance at the menu. (Photos courtesy Norman Winter)



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Summer Time Feels....

By Jelly Cocanougher

The fireworks were beaming as lightning bugs swayed between the tree leaves. They lit up a small area for a short amount of time, moving from one area to the next as my eyes followed. St. Augustine grass was between our toes as wide eyes focused in on the bursting light show above. 

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