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# INTER

January 2023



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## ***publishing***

### **PUBLISHER**

JM Winter

### **EDITOR**

Dani Blackburn  
editor@ntfronline.com

## ***production***

### **ART DIRECTOR**

Kayla Jean Woolf  
kayla@postoakmedia.net

## ***advertising executives***

Kathy Miller  
kathy@postoakmedia.net

Sherrie Nelson  
sherrie@postoakmedia.net

Rosemary Stephens  
rosemary@postoakmedia.net

## ***distribution***

### **MANAGER**

Kayla Jean Woolf  
kayla@postoakmedia.net

### **DISTRIBUTORS**

Pat Blackburn  
Riley Blackburn  
Paul Evans

## ***contribution***

### **CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

Rayford Pullen

Lindsey Monk

Norman Winter

Krista Lucas Wynn

Phillip Kitts

Lacey Vilhauer

Jessica Kader

Robert Lang

Barry Whitworth, DVM

Annette Bridges

Garrett Metcalf, DVM

Dave Alexander

Tony Dean

Andy Anderson

Jelly Cocanougher

Jared Groce

Tressa Lawrence

Martha Crump

### **COPY EDITORS**

Krista Lucas Wynn

## ***administration***

Brenda Bingham  
accounting@postoakmedia.net

## **CONTACT US**

North Texas Farm & Ranch magazine  
200 Walnut St., Bowie, TX 76230  
940-872-5922, [www.ntfronline.com](http://www.ntfronline.com)

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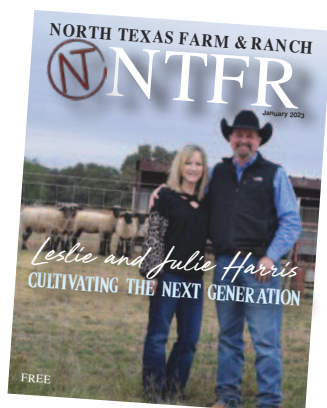


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## **ON THE COVER**

On the cover is Leslie Harris, agriculture teacher and livestock judge, and his wife, Julie, teacher, and together, the pair also raise sheep and goats. (Photo by Dani Blackburn)



# *letter from the editor*

**H**ello readers, and welcome to the January issue of North Texas Farm & Ranch magazine.

As we turn the page into a new year, many of us will wonder what 2023 has in store for us. Perhaps we will even make a few resolutions, with hopes of bettering our health, mindset, habits or

productivity. But as we take this time to look forward, I also want to take a moment to pause and look around, soaking in the blessings that are already a part of my life. That includes you, our readers, who continue to support our magazine on this journey as we bring you agricultural content from North Texas. We appreciate you and look forward to a great year.

We kick off this year by featuring two individuals making a difference in the future by shaping the minds of tomorrow. Meet Leslie Harris, agriculture teacher and livestock judge, and his wife, Julie, also a teacher. The pair is passionate about teaching the next generation of farmers, ranchers, and leaders, and I think you will enjoy learning more about their story.

Turn the pages to read more from our wonderful group of contributors, from agriculture in Wyoming to delicious recipes, to beef promotion.

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 New Year!

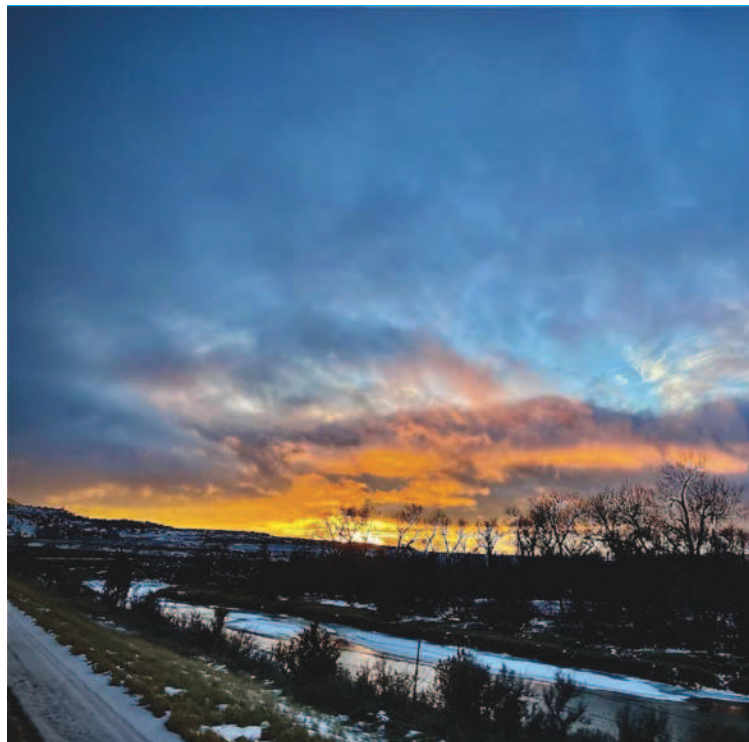


*Dani Blackburn*

**Dani Blackburn, Editor**  
editor@ntfronline.com



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**Brandon Jenkins**  
940-765-2101  
brandonj@txfarmworx.com

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Family Nurse Practitioner



**Khawaja Anwar, M.D.**  
Internal Medicine/Cardiology



**Jessica Bowman, FNP-C**  
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**Eric Hellman, M.D.**  
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**North Texas Farm & Ranch**  
November 18 at 8:11 AM · 🌐


Since most ranchers experienced drought conditions and with fall fast approaching, producers with fescue pastures should closely observe their livestock for any signs of fescue toxicity. According to Mike Trammel, Pottawatomie County Ag Educator and Multi-County Agronomist, fescue toxins (ergot alkaloids) tend to increase in Kentucky-31 tall fescue pastures in the fall. [READ MORE: http://ntfronline.com/2022/11/fescue-foot/](http://ntfronline.com/2022/11/fescue-foot/)



## TWITTER FEED

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There is a real upside to two new sweet potatoes making their debut in 2023. [READ MORE: ntfronline.com/2022/11/the-ga...](http://ntfronline.com/2022/11/the-ga...)



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# MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

By Rayford Pullen | [rcpullen@yahoo.com](mailto:rcpullen@yahoo.com)

**H**appy New Year my friends as we complete another trip around the sun. The past few years have seen many changes in our industry, and 2023 will not be an exception, the rules will change once again.

Over-the-counter antibiotics currently available will now be under veterinary oversight. This adds another cost of doing business and will lead to yet another layer of accountability that will be required by producers, animal health suppliers and veterinarians. Running down to your local animal health store will now require a prescription in addition to cash to purchase antibiotics to maintain the health and wellbeing of our animals.

The FDA believes good antimicrobial stewardship practices in animals helps slow the development of antimicrobial resistance and preserve the effectiveness of these drugs in both humans and animals. With the new regulations, you are required to consult a veterinarian to obtain a prescription before you can purchase antibiotics.

Producers will now be required to have a veterinary-client-patient relationship in place by June 2023. With a valid VCPR, veterinarians may make medical judgments and prescribe medications, including antibiotics or antimicrobials, for livestock if the veterinarian believes the owner will follow their instructions.

In my opinion, there may be a segment of the industry that needs to have more oversight than others and, in this case, these changes would be good.

For those of us that are just doing our best to survive and do things right, it will not be a big deal. Most of us work with a veterinarian we trust to help make decisions regarding animal health and wellbeing.

Our view of the industry is extremely limited, and we all assume everyone operates about like us, but obviously that is not the case.

When human health is brought into the equation, all the rules change. Whether they are correct or not in their concerns, it is just the way it is going to be, and like it or not, get ready to comply because it will soon become the law.

We are an independent lot, and having someone else determine our credibility from the outside looking in just does not sit well. We



want to continue in the food animal business, so we will adapt.

In summation, do everything you can to prevent your animals from becoming sick and avoid the use of antibiotics.


Beef Quality Assurance was the topic of discussion at a recent meeting we hosted at Pullen Angus, sponsored by the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and Texas AgriLife Extension.

For those of you that have not been to one of these meetings, I highly recommend it, and I will also guarantee you will learn something. The training is also available online at [www.bqa.org](http://www.bqa.org).

Our entire crew attended, and from their responses, they either learned something or at least learned why we do the things we do, the way we do them. One thing covered was

the placement of vaccines, antibiotics and dewormers in the neck of the animal, making sure to put injectable dewormers on the opposite side of the neck from vaccines to keep the vaccines viable and keeping injection sites about four inches apart. Another topic covered by Dr. Ron Gill, Extension Livestock Specialist, was not injecting more than 10 millimeters of a product, in most cases antibiotics, in a single injection site since absorption rates will be compromised.

Our shared thoughts are most autoptic and having seen many seasons over the years, is the basis of how we conduct our business. We are never too old to learn, and then again we may need a little reaffirmation as we all get a little stale on occasion.

It is a wonderful time to be in the cattle business. 



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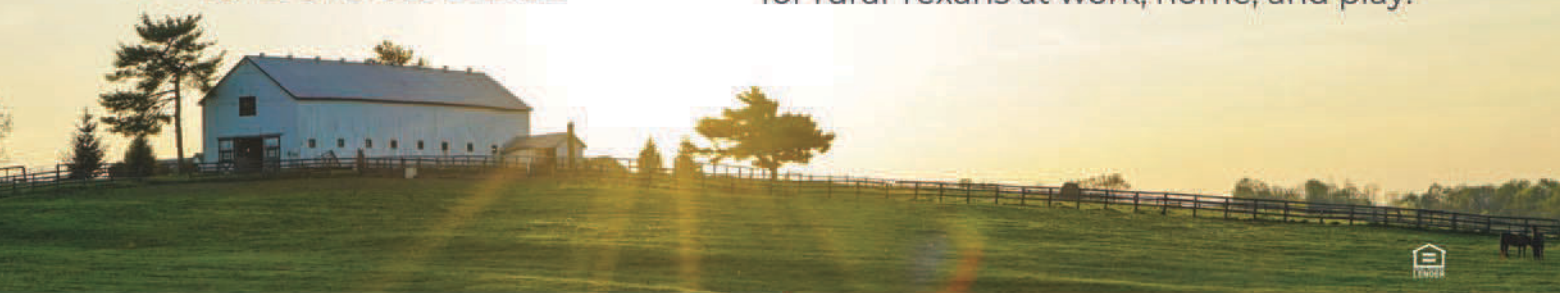
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# AG *elsewhere* MONTANA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK




**H**appy New Year! A brief break and the cycle will continue again. Wishing everyone a positive and successful 2023. 



# AG *elsewhere* WYOMING

PHOTO BY TRESSA LAWRENCE



Frosty mornings on the creek bank in northern Wyoming. 



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**63.87 ACRES | ARCHER COUNTY**



**NEW LISTING**

**L.A. HILL**

**\$8,875/Ac**

Located 10 minutes from Wichita Falls, in Holliday ISD. Mostly open rolling grass land with scattered trees. Heavily wooded seasonal creek. The highest elevated point is on the back side of the property, offering panoramic views. Rectangular in shape with 984 feet of frontage on FM 1954 and is 2,830 feet deep. The entire boundary is fenced, set of metal livestock corrals, two stock ponds, electricity is available, water is available, and a meter will be installed prior to closing. Listing Agent, Jon Moss - 940-867-6743

**167 ACRES + HOUSE | MONTAGUE COUNTY**



**4S RANCH**

**\$11,750/Ac**

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. Listing Agent, Jon Moss - 940-867-6743.

**210.32 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY**

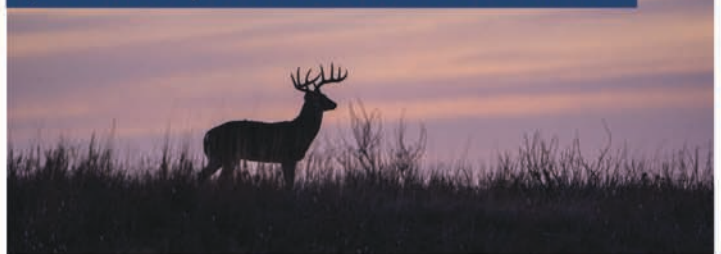


**SIMS FARM**

**\$2,753/Ac**

Located west of Burk Burnett and north of Iowa Park on the south and east side of FM 368. The property consists of approximately 145 acres of farmland with the balance being native mesquite pasture. The topography is level to sloping southeast. Amenities includes a stock pond and barbed wire perimeter fence. No minerals are owned.

**7,085.56 ACRES | WICHITA & WILBARGER COUNTIES**



**SWANSON RANCH**

**\$1,895/Ac**

Located south of Electra and west of Wichita Falls. This is an outstanding large combination ranch with unbelievable hunting. It's entire south and most of the west boundaries adjoin the famous 550k acre Waggoner Ranch. The land is diverse with level to rolling mesquite pasture, large plateaus and ridges with deep ravines, heavily wooded bottom land with Short and Long Creek traversing the ranch and 970 acres of tillable farmland. It has great access with frontage 3 sides. Great interior road system, several cattle working pens, numerous ponds. Equipment and cattle are negotiable.

**121 ACRES + HOUSE | WICHITA COUNTY**



**REIS FARM**

**\$595,000**

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.

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**Decker Farms - 5.03 Acres - Archer Co - \$89,500**  
**Thornberry Lots - 4.5 Acres - Wichita Co - \$45,000**

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# LAND MARKET REPORT

## NOVEMBER 2022


By Jared Groce

The North Texas rural land market had a roller coaster ride in 2022 with an incredibly strong start and ending on a whimper. Demand was very strong for the first half of the year, and then abruptly dropped off in the second half as we entered the election season and with the sharp increase in inflation putting the brakes on the market. It is natural for the fall to be slow every two years when the election cycle rolls around, but this year we were handed the addition of major inflation rates, and consequently, higher interest rates on loan products. Major real estate economists all seem to agree that the North Texas land market will be relatively unharmed by the current economic situation due to the demand from people immigrating here from other parts of the nation, as well as other nations. The exception may be the length of time it takes to get a property sold will likely be longer for the next year or so.

### NORTH TEXAS

YEAR	AVG ACRES	\$ / ACRE	ASK/SELL RATIO	DOM	TRANSACTIONS
2018	52.290	\$12,632.00	92.80	188	435
2019	42.340	\$12,927.00	91.90	161	400
2020	47.620	\$14,097.00	93.70	183	509
2021	49.520	\$19,143.00	97.40	183	829
2022	42.630	\$29,226.00	96.80	114	579

This shows that land is 2.314 times more expensive than it was just five years ago, in 2018, and a 52 percent increase in just one year between 2021 and 2022.

Watch for a more in-depth recap of the year in next month's edition of North Texas Farm & Ranch. 

*Data from North Texas Real Estate Information System for the period of January 1 – December 1 for Collin, Cooke, Denton, Grayson, Montague and Wise Counties combined. Auction properties excluded.*



# Acorn Toxicity

By Barry Whitworth, DVM



A tentative diagnosis of acorn poisoning may be based on clinical signs and access to acorns. Blood tests that indicate kidney disease is another clue to the condition. (Courtesy photo)

With the prolonged drought, most pastures are in poor condition. With the lack of available forage, animals may go in search of alternative foods. If oak trees are in the pastures, acorns may be a favorite meal for some livestock this fall. This may result in oak poisoning.

Oak (*Quercus* species) leaves, twigs, buds, and acorns may be toxic to some animals when consumed. Obviously, acorns can be a problem in the fall and green acorns can be more toxic than mature acorns. When acorns form only a small portion of the diet, there are usually no signs of problems.

However, consumption of large quantities may result in toxicity. Tannins in the acorns cause the toxicity. The most common tissue damaged by the tannins are the digestive tract and kidneys. Cattle and sheep appear to be

more susceptible to toxicity than goats. Other animals such as horses, rabbits, and chickens have succumbed to the toxicity of oak poisoning as well. Interestingly, some individual animals are more tolerable of the toxins and show no ill effects when consuming acorns.

Clinical signs of oak toxicity usually appear a few days after consumption of acorns. Initially, the animals are weak, listless, emaciated, and anorexic.

This is followed by ventral edema (swelling of lower parts of the body such as legs, chest, ventral abdomen), urinating large amounts of urine, abdominal pain, and constipation. The animal may pass hard, mucus-covered fecal material which may change to black tarry or bloody feces as the disease progresses. If the animal is not treated, kidney failure is likely.

A tentative diagnosis of acorn poisoning may be based on clinical signs and access to acorns. Blood tests that indicate kidney disease is another clue to the condition. A necropsy with examination of tissues for characteristic lesions of the disease is the standard to confirm a diagnosis of oak toxicity.

Treatment of oak toxicity starts with removing the animals from the area where the acorns are located.


Those animals displaying signs of the disease should be given fluids to correct dehydration and electrolyte imbalances. Mineral oil and/or activated charcoal may be given to reduce toxin absorption. If animals survive the initial toxicity, they may recover, but it may take several weeks for kidney function to return to normal.



As always, prevention is better than treatment. Producers should be very careful allowing livestock to graze in areas where acorns are present.

Livestock should be fed plenty of hay and feed this fall to avoid overconsumption of acorns. For those producers who cannot avoid grazing areas with large numbers of oak trees, feeding a grain mixture with 10 to 20 percent of calcium hydroxide has been successful in preventing problems with acorn poisoning.

The year 2022 was not the best year for livestock producers. The drought produced poor pasture conditions as well as very little hay. On top of those problems, feed costs continue to increase. The last problem a producer needs is a large number of sick cows.

For those that graze an area with a large number of oak trees, prevention may be worth the cost this year. At the very least keep a close watch of your animals this fall. Producers wanting more information about oak toxicity, should consult with their local veterinarian or visit with their Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension County Agriculture Educator. 



Oak (*Quercus* species) leaves, twigs, buds, and acorns may be toxic to some animals when consumed. (Courtesy photo)



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# An All-Around Cowgirl

By Krista Lucas Wynn

The all-around is a prestigious title to win in any association in the rodeo world. Mekenna Davis, a high school senior from Huntsville, Texas, won the coveted title, not only in the United Professional Rodeo Association but also the Cowboys Professional Rodeo Association, a rare feat especially at such a young age.

The UPRA is based in Texas and spans across six southern states. Many competitors proudly call Texas home, with several past champions being featured in NTFR over the years. Davis has been a member of the CPRA for two years and just recently joined the UPRA in 2022. She competes in barrel racing and breakaway roping, and is no stranger to success in the rodeo arena, previously winning in the youth and high school ranks.

"I started riding when I was two, and never stopped after that. My father, Rusty, owns the trailer store in Huntsville and sells skid steer equipment," Davis said. "I go help him with sales and deliver and pick up trailers and equipment. I also enjoy being with family and being around the people I care for and love."

The young cowgirl has a steady head on her shoulders, and she carries a winning mentality into the rodeo arena.

Davis and her horses have quickly become a team to watch out for when they run down the alley or back in the box.

"I rope off of a red roan named Mexico that came from a close friend of mine off of the ranch she works on," Davis said. "Eddie is my barrel horse. He is a seven-year-old gelding, by Eddie Stinson out of a Bully Bullion mare."

Eddie, purchased from futurity trainer Ryan Reynolds, helped her win the UPRA barrel racing rookie of the year title, along with the all-around.

"I was speechless. I was not expecting the amazing outcome at the end of the season," Davis said. "I had just got Eddie mid-season and was really just focusing on seasoning him. Later in the season, we were getting faster and making better runs, and I set our first arena record on him in Orange, Texas. Eddie and I set three arena records in the 2022 UPRA and CPRA season."

The CPRA season culminated in Angleton, Texas, Oct. 14-16, where Davis finished the rodeo season as reserve champion barrel racer



Mekenna Davis, 2022 UPRA and CPRA all-around cowgirl. (Photo courtesy rodeobum.com)

and all-around champion. The Cinch UPRA Finals, usually conducted in Sulphur Springs, Texas, made the big move to the State Fair of Texas for 2022, and the move was well received.

"I thought it was an amazing facility," Davis said. "I enjoyed the hospitality, the amazing people, the support and kindness from everyone. The arena was absolutely perfectly set up, and the ground was amazing. It was just so easy and very well put together."

When all was said and done, Davis won a total of \$22,303 and wrapped up the Women's All-Around title. She has more lofty goals in sight as she continues her rodeo career.

"I have been accepted to Sam Houston State University, and I plan to try to make the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in the next year or two," she said.

This multi-talented cowgirl is just getting started and will be one to keep an eye on in the near future.





# Getting Their Shot

By Phillip Kitts

Closing out a rodeo season can be nearly as traumatic as the ups and downs of running the rodeo road for months on end.

Everyone who follows the sport of rodeo hears all the year-end talk about who made their way to the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo, who fell short, and who will have their eyes set on the yellow bucking chutes for the next year. The fact is just like all sports, the focus is probably just where it needs to be with the athletes that become the faces of the sport.

However, let's take a moment and discuss the inner workings of a long list of just as important people who may not compete in a traditional sense but compete just the same all year long. It is probably not common knowledge that outside of the two-legged athletes, many other athletes and individuals fight their way to the yellow chutes of Las Vegas, starting with the animal athletes. For 12 months, hundreds of animal athletes travel up and down the same roads as the cowboys and for eight seconds at a time they do the one thing they were bred to do. They buck, run, and perform to the best of their ability.

In turn, if they catch the attention of the athletes of pro rodeo, they just might catch a chance for a ride to Sin City for the top 10 days in the sport. If they are selected, they bring their owners along which is the dream of all the folks who dedicated their lives to being a stock contractor in professional rodeo. Many of these will even reach the pinnacle of a career and win a round during the WNFR.

So, there is a small window of the animal and contractor side of the house and their road to the big show. This is not the end of the list of hard-working people who



Many other athletes and individuals fight their way to the yellow chutes of Las Vegas.

compete to play a role at the end of the season. On a whole different platform is a list of people who put in hours of hard work and sleepless nights getting from rodeo to rodeo with the same goal. We will start this list with pickup men and bullfighters. These unsung heroes of pro rodeo travel from rodeo to rodeo and do the job they are best at, if it is not saving cowboys from bulls, it is rescuing them from wild horses.

Throughout the year these hard working men become well-known amongst the pro rodeo athletes, when the year concludes if they have worked hard enough and played enough of a role, they just might find themselves on the short list to be selected for WNFR.

At the end of the year two pickup men and an alternate as well as three bullfighters and an alternate will find themselves headed to Vegas in December.

On the entertainment side of the house the goal is the same and the competition is just as fierce. With people like barrel men, spe-

cialty acts and a few others, they also spend the entire year running from rodeo to rodeo working their magic in the specific trade. If they have done their part to impress the masses, then they also can find themselves on the short list to perform at the WNFR.

This also applies to additional positions within the ranks of the WNFR, photographers, announcers, and several other key positions are all part of a selection process that requires a long grueling year of hard work and determination.

Anyone can imagine the sense of celebration that goes with finding the success of a long years' worth of work. Something that is probably not on the forefront is the agony of defeat that goes along with falling short of the end goal. The reality is falling short is a painful pill to swallow, thousands of miles and lots of good effort, then finding out that you did not make the cut can take a toll on someone.

It is often too easy to fall into the trench of questions about your

ability, the choices you made throughout the year and your performance as the year transpired. The deep trench only gets deeper when one allows themselves to continue to wallow in the emotional struggle of rejection.

If one were to sit and watch the social media networks, you would often see a multitude of responses to this rejection and observe many of these hard-working dedicated rodeo contractors fight to stay out of the trench of misery.

Unfortunately, not everyone takes to the rejection with any amount of grace or professionalism. Like with any process you will quickly see the ugly side where accusations of corruption, unfairness, or favoritism will consume some opinions. The regrettable fact is that this is far more common than the other side of the fence where folks who have fallen short put their sites on fixing themselves, working harder and having a better plan to get their shot the next year.

Digging into the deep soul of





earning one's way into the WNFR, there are factors that one can control and there are factors that are just not something a person can influence. In many ways being at the right place or right rodeo during the right time is just something that plays a part. On the other side of the coin, getting out there and working hard and being productive and reliable is the only way to put yourself in the right place at the right time.

The fact is just putting yourself out there on any platform is proof of one's bravery, dealing with the trauma of rejection and failure shows one's true character. When you come across that personnel dawning a gold buckle just know they have worked very hard to earn that piece of hardware. But just as much as the year they got there, is probably years of heartache, trials and tribulations that came before they got their shot. (N)



There is a list of people who put in hours of hard work and sleepless nights getting from rodeo to rodeo with the goal of making it to the WNFR. (Photos courtesy Phillip Kitts, Avid Visual Imagery Rodeo Photography)

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# How to Winterize Your Horse

By Dr. Garrett Metcalf, DVM

As many of us know as horse owners or caretakers, horses can have some difficulties with adjustment to colder weather or acute weather changes. These issues can be more of a nuisance for owners but sometimes can be a serious health issue for the horse. The goal of this article is to give some practical tips and guidelines that owners can use to keep their horses healthy throughout the winter.

## Housing and Feeding

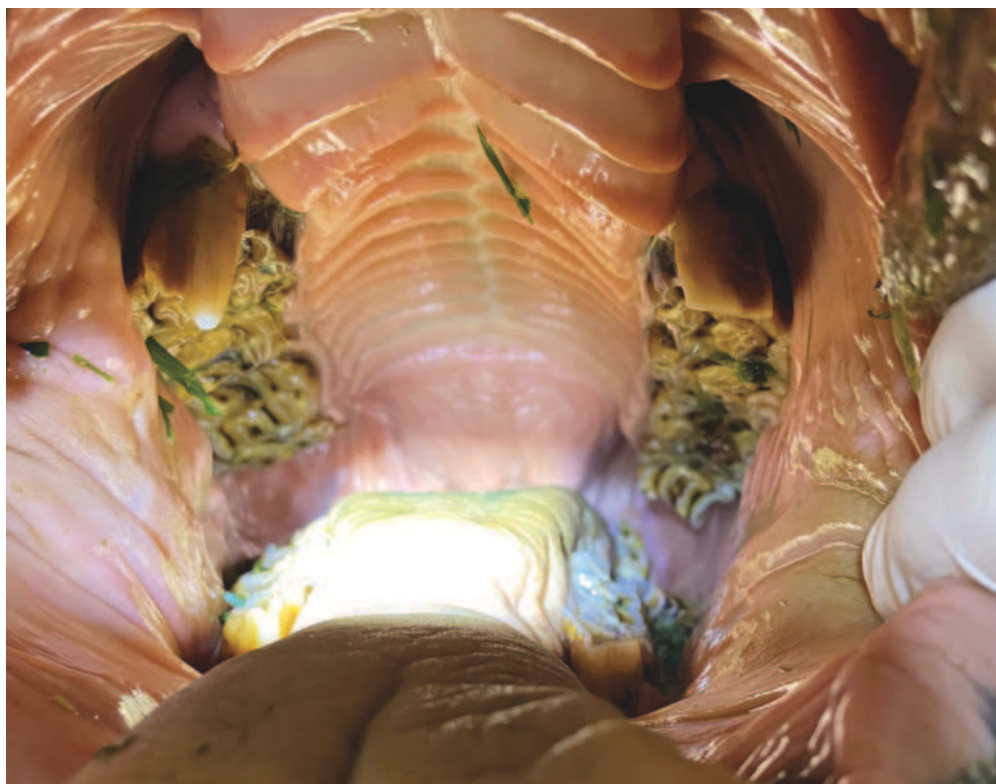
Owners often have the best intentions when it comes to keeping their horses comfortable and well-protected from the elements but keeping a horse(s) in stalls throughout the winter may not always be the best for the horse's health. Horses in nature are meant to be continuous grazers and constantly on the move. Putting them in a stall setting in a closed up barn can lead to respiratory issues from the lack of airflow and increased dust and ammonia from urine. That combination of ammonia from urine and dust from shavings or hay can cause some serious lower airway irritation. These irritants can cause coughing, runny nose, difficulties breathing, runny eyes and possible trigger equine asthma episodes in at-risk horses.

If a horse needs to be stalled it is recommended to allow good ventilation and to try to mimic pasture grazing in a stall setting. Cleaning the stalls more regular to remove urine and keeping a more dust-free bedding such as cardboard waste or pelletized shavings that have less dust can be helpful. Soaking hay with water can also cut down on dust in the barn. When cleaning up barn isles or stalls, it is wise not to use leaf blowers or other equipment that will create a lot of dust.

To help a horse eat more slowly throughout the day and turn a few flakes of hay into a grazing experience rather than a meal which can help reduce colic episodes, stall vices, reduce hay use and keep horses more satisfied over a longer period of time. The way to easily achieve this is go use slow feeders just has hay bags with small holes or hay bins that have a cover that has small perforations to allow some hay through to mimic grazing.

## Turnout and Blankets

Keeping a horse turned out the majority of the day in my opinion is better for a horse if that is possible from a husbandry stand point, but I



It is important to keep up with good dental care or risk dental issues.

know that is not always practical. Everyone's situation and facilities are different, making it more challenging at times to keep horses out of the barn. If there are pastures or paddock turnouts available, it is best to utilize them as much as possible. Turn out can reduce the risk of colic, development of stall vices and help reduced the risk of respiratory issues, especially in horses that already have equine asthma. Free exercise is also helpful for horses with arthritis, lack of muscling or have other musculoskeletal issues that require turnout.

Blanketing is not always necessary in horses in order to keep them protected from the elements.

Older, thin horses, or horses with chronic illness will benefit from blanketing in cold conditions in order to maintain body heat and help to minimize weight loss. It has been found too that horses will consume less hay when blanketed in the winter months.

## Water

Keeping fresh water for horses is essential to reduce risk of impactions or other colic episodes that may occur. Horses should consume about six to 10 gallons of water per day while

just a rest or normal daily activity. Automatic waters can be problematic because of freezing issues and inability to monitor daily water intake amounts but they are convenient. It is important to make sure the water sources have heaters if it is outside and that it is cleaned regularly. In an older study in ponies it was found that they would drink more water daily if the temperature was near 60 degrees verses colder temperatures.

Other ways to encourage more water intake in horses is by adding salt to horse's daily grain or by free choice salt blocks. Wetting grain or hay can also be helpful to keep a horse well-hydrated in the winter, and I have found that some horses prefer hydrated feed or hay over some that is not.

## Dental Care

It is important to keep up with good dental care especially before going into winter when the majority of the diet for horses will be hay rather than pasture grazing green grasses during the winter months. Good dentition will ensure adequate grinding of feed stuffs and better digestion to further prevent colic issues. Dental abnormalities such as wave mouths, hook,






points and other malocclusions can lead to longer strands of hay fibers being swallowed leading to increased risk of large or small colon impactions. Poor dentition can also lead to higher risk for horses having esophageal obstructions or choke which is also a medical emergency in many cases.

#### Take Home

It is always important to be ahead of the curve and more prepared before cold weather strikes to keep your horses healthy and happy. During harsh winter weather events it is difficult for veterinarians to manage emergencies loads and when the roads are hazardous it makes getting to the farm calls even more precarious or impossible at times.

Extreme weather events are not always easily predicted but having a plan and recourses in place can certainly help avert a potential crisis. 



Large colon impaction. (Photos courtesy of Dr. Garrett Metcalf)

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# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

I hope it doesn't take you 40 years to become comfortable with your life.

It was the summer of 1980 when I was first introduced to the strange new world of cattle ranching. If you've been reading my columns then you know how foreign my new home felt to this city girl once upon a time. I felt uncomfortable, inadequate and unprepared. I was too shy and intimidated to admit my feelings to my husband or his parents who were my next-door neighbors on the cattle ranch we shared.

So what did this young city girl do? She stayed in her house and tried to do her best at making her new residence feel like home. She learned to cook for her sweet country boy who loved to eat.

She was ready to help anytime she was asked. But she was terrified to offer her help because of her uncertainties about her abilities to do the job anyone expected of her. To be very honest with y'all, I would say she quickly desired motherhood so she had someone to spend her lonely days with indoors. She believed she could be a good mamma and longed to feel proficient at something!

It was indeed some 40 years after moving to my husband's family ranch before I finally felt well at ease with my life and skills as a cattle rancher. It would not be until the passing of my husband's parents and mine. It would also not be until our nest was completely empty following the passing of our beloved dachshund and our daughter's final departure to make a home for herself.

I feel like I may have said this before but just in case not I will say it again. It wasn't until this unimaginable pandemic and spending much more time by my husband's side that I gained a fresh view of where I'd already spent more than 40 years of my life.

I suddenly realized how much I actually knew about our ranching life and started sharing my points of views and ideas with my partner. We had discussions about our precious cows and their babies. We talked about equipment repair needs and tasks to be accomplished. We started exploring our joint



It was 40 years after moving to her husband's family ranch before Annette felt well at ease with her life and skills as a cattle rancher. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

ranching goals as we looked to our future.

Perhaps it's hard for some to believe I could have spent so much of my life and marriage feeling disconnected to the place I called home, but sadly it is true.

I sincerely don't want the same to happen to any other newbie adjusting from a city to a country life. So I have some suggestions for you.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's okay to not know.

You truly are capable of more than you think. Try. Try again. It's by practice that we learn and become more proficient. (Notice I didn't say perfect.)


There's always more to learn. Stay teachable.

There actually isn't only one right way to do

something, but we can learn much from those who are more experienced than we are.

Be patient and kind with yourself when doing something you've never done before. There are so many things that can't be learned except by doing. Making mistakes often provides us the greatest lessons.

My mamma instructed me again and again to not let anything or anyone take my joy from me. The truth is nothing or no one can rob you of your joy, your peace, your confidence and pretty much anything else unless you give them the power to do so. So don't.

Perhaps my best advice to you newbie country girls is to be plucky. In case you don't know, this means to be brave, bold, daring, determined, undaunted, audacious, spunky and feisty as you learn about your new world. 





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# Leslie and Julie Harris

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Leslie and Julie Harris have been instrumental in guiding youth during their careers. Leslie, as a top-respected livestock judge and agriculture teacher, and Julie, as a special education and now English teacher.

"If a student eats, they are involved in agriculture. That is the very first thing I say when I teach ag. We talk about how the number one industry in our county is ag. It is where our food comes from. If we don't pay attention, we're going to be hurting. I don't sugarcoat it. As a vocational agriculture teacher, we teach kids about opportunities they have to build their communities and raise their families," Leslie said.

Julie grew up playing softball in Arlington with one older brother. She had plans to become a county extension agent when she attended Tarleton State University, interning at the King Ranch. There she had the opportunity to work a radio show, assist in elementary programs, and help with a variety of other agricultural tasks under well-known county extension agent Harvey Buehring of Robstown, Texas.

Meanwhile, Leslie, or Les as many know him as, grew up in Azle

**Continued on page 32**









**Continued from page 31**

with two older sisters. He got an early start to livestock showing in kindergarten, the age allowed in Parker County. It was in fifth grade when he realized he wanted to be an ag teacher when he grew up, partly in thanks to two of his own ag teachers who were instrumental in shaping who he is today. He has remained close with both men, Stormy Mullins and Dr. Kirk Edney.

In 1986, Les graduated Azle High School and attended Weatherford College on a livestock judging scholarship before moving to Tarleton State University, where he also judged. Les and Julie met in government class and were married just one year later. After finishing their education, they moved to Calallen in Corpus Christi where Les had accepted a job with the largest FFA chapter in the nation. He remained there for his first year in education and made a lifetime friend with his teaching partner, Jim Alsup, who recently retired from Decatur ISD. The Harrises next moved to Throckmorton.

Along the way, Les and Julie became parents to Katy and Coy, and when Katy was around the age of two, Julie decided to join her husband in the teaching field. She received her certification in special education. She would go on to teach special education for 12 years before moving to general education. She taught at the elementary level for a while but has been with middle school for the past decade.

The Harrises moved a few times, but always knew North Texas was where they wanted to eventually settle. Les's mother was from Ringgold, and his father, from Nocona, with kin all along the Red River. After his father's death, Les and Julie reevaluated where they wanted to be, and made the decision to move to North Texas where they cared

**Continued on page 34**



Julie Harris with two of the lambs raised by her and her husband, Leslie.



Leslie Harris is a teacher at Prairie Valley, a school in Montague County. (Photos courtesy of Leslie and Julie Harris)






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Leslie Harris recently completed his 300th show as a livestock judge. (Photo courtesy Leslie and Julie Harris)

### Continued from page 32

for his mother until her passing in 2020. While living in Nocona, Les has been able to hear stories of his parents and grandparents and meet family he never even knew he had before.

“It’s been a long road, but it has been rewarding. It has been a good place to live and there are a lot of good people here. We go to a good church, and we have a lot of family,” Les said. “During the process of all that moving, we always had sheep and goats and we always had each other.”

Now, their days are like clockwork. Les teaches agriculture at Prairie Valley ISD in Nocona, Texas. As of the 2020-2021 school year, it had 152 students enrolled in grades kinder through twelfth, according to the Texas Tribune. Julie teaches English and a Bible elective at Montague ISD, a school in Montague, Texas, for students through eighth grade.

Next semester, she’ll be teaching an agriculture class of her own. For the 2020-2021 school year, Montague ISD had 151 students enrolled. The Harrises begin feeding their sheep and goats, which include around 60 head, at 5 a.m. Then it is off to school for Julie, where she arrives by 7 a.m., and Les is at the bus barn for his route by 6:45 a.m.

“I think one of the advantages of Prairie Valley and Montague over big schools is I walk down that hall and I am hitting every grade. First, second, third, fourth, fifth, all the way down, and they know my name. We eat breakfast with them, lunch with them, they know how I like my coffee, they know what pickup I drive, they know my dog’s name and where I go to church. They just know everything about us,” Les said.

“And some have been out here for field trips learning about sheep and goats,” Julie said.

In addition to his teaching duties, Les has been judging livestock shows since 1986. At the time he was home visiting his ag teacher, Mr. Mullins, telling him about his adventures on the judging team at Weatherford College, when his teacher asked him to work a show at Boswell.

“He told me it would pay \$100 bill and a belt buckle. Back then, they didn’t hand those things out very often and it was right before the Fort Worth Stock Show. I was, of course, broke, so I went and judged that show, and then I wore that belt buckle to the stock show. I thought I was Donny Gay walking in there. That was my very first one,” Les recalled.

Recently Les completed his 300th show, receiving a banner for the accomplishment. Although he is often asked to judge other livestock such as pigs or cattle, he primarily sticks to his expertise of sheep and goats. He has requests

for shows from all over the state, north to south and east to west. He explains livestock judging is subjective and similar to judging a beauty pageant like Miss Texas.

“With meat judging and poultry judging, you’re either right or you’re wrong. The other is fairly subjective. It’s a guess or hypothesis. You just hope you guess right a lot and if you don’t guess right a lot, you’re not invited back to judge,” Les said. “It is a lot of time missed at home. It is the loneliest job you’ll ever have because you are isolated. You want to be fair to the breeders and the exhibitors.”

It is important to the livestock judge to be able to provide good feedback to those individuals in the shows and be knowledgeable in the subject matter.

“I feel more confident now with that at 54 years old than I did at one time. I educate a whole lot more. I want to give them an honest and upfront assessment





of what we are looking at. I'm not scared to talk to them about their livestock. I probably talk to them too much," Les chuckled. "It's hard work, I'm not going to lie. This past weekend was some of the best livestock I have ever judged in Lamesa, Texas. As soon as I walked in the ring, I knew I was going to be there a while."

When social media was first introduced, it provided additional challenges to the job as people took to their devices to express criticism in judges. Les attempts to stay out of those arguments, and says he is fortunate he has not had too much displeasure expressed but can see where social media comments can be unnerving for the newer judges. Over the years, what Les has looked for when judging livestock has changed, and he knows it will for those newer judges, too, as they learn to navigate the field.

"Early on I would be worried about who clapped for the winner or if there was a big round of applause for them. It would be the first thing I looked for. Now, when I look at the photos of the backdrop pictures, it is more rewarding knowing I selected something that was great. That there is evidence and consistency. I always say, 'Life is too short to have ugly sheep.' I said that last weekend and a lot of people agreed with me. It is gratifying when I see consistency in those backdrop pictures," Les said.

However, at the end of the day, it is not about the livestock, but about making a difference in kids' lives. He recently experienced that at a show when an exhibitor approached him to share her feedback.

"A girl last weekend almost put a tear to my eye. She walked up to me and said, 'I want to tell you something. You made me feel so relaxed in the ring.' The girl was in high school, so I know she had showed before. My daughter happened to be there, and I was hard



Leslie and Julie Harris raised two children, Katy and Coy. (Photos courtesy Leslie and Julie Harris)

on my kids when they were showing. I looked over at my daughter, and she rolled her eyes," Les laughed. "But the girl said, 'I'm serious. I'm always very nervous, but I wasn't nervous around you.' I think that was rewarding to hear a compliment like that."

He explained it is also gratifying to hear from well-respect breeders who make it a point to come up to him and relay how glad they are he is judging.

"He also likes it when those littles come up and hug him," Julie smiled.

Les can't help but nod his head in agreement.

"What can I say? It gets emotional sometimes," Les said.

The whole process is an important aspect for today's youth. It takes a lot of work, especially in a day and age when many families are so busy.

"We want them to get a well-rounded education on the showing part. We have some kids who show every weekend, sometimes they show two times every week-

end. Then we have some kids who want to show just one time at the county show, which is great. It is meant to be fun and represent the animal in the best way you possibly can. It takes work, training and responsibility," Les said.

Livestock showing can also be an expensive endeavor, which is why other judging opportunities are available as an alternative for those who cannot afford the livestock side or have other interests.

"Sometimes, these kids don't have the means to show, but you get them interested in the judging and they excel in those areas without breaking the bank," Julie said.

For example, the Harrises' daughter, Katy, was on the 2018 Oklahoma State University meat judging team, where they won the national championship that year. There also is tractor judging, ag mechanics, land judging, home economics, food, cooking, and a variety of other choices.

"In Texas, it is the toughest state to compete because in some

contests there can be anywhere from 100 to 400 teams in any division of any age that these kids go up against. They need to not think in terms of winning but in terms of learning. You have to trust the process," Les explained.

At Prairie Valley, they have even started ag photography, important for marketing agriculture. At the school there were 87 photography entries for the second annual show. Not only is it inexpensive, but it is exciting and represents agriculture.

"I think that is showing students what it can be. It should be about learning and fun, rather than being worried about money. We have to understand that and give students another alternative to learn about agriculture without breaking the bank," Les said.

It is one way that teachers continue to meet the needs of their students, while facing numerous other challenges. Les and Julie say they are fortunate to teach in smaller, rural settings that in a way, make things easier.

"Many of my students live in Montague, Nocona, or Bowie. Most are just pretty good country kids. They do have challenges. I have noticed it is difficult to keep them engaged, which is hard in my subject area, because I can only do so many hands-on things. But I started a Bible class elective, which they love because it is more laid back and they get to have fun," Julie said. "We have friends who live in the big cities and teach ag and make \$100,000, but it's not about the money. It's just so much more relaxed out here. Money is not everything. You have to enjoy it and have that relationship with people."

Being in a rural community also provides numerous firsthand opportunities for youth.

"I still teach animal science labs. I can fire up the bus at Prairie Valley and drive any direction and have a lesson plan. We're that

**Continued on page 36**





Continued from page 35

close to the Chisholm Trail. Just on my way to school I pass by 250 to 300 head of cattle, farms and ranches. I can teach about range management, grasses, cattle, or meat production and not even get off the bus. I don't have as much of a challenge compared to someone who lives in the metroplex because they don't see what we see every day. Some people think it's a disadvantage to be in a rural school, but I think it's a plus. It's a real education. All my stuff is hands on. We keep the kids busy working," Les said.

Les also knows teaching is about the community and those who count on him.

"Kids are going to have problems, adults are going to have problems, everyone is going to have problems. We have a choice to wake up in the morning in a bad mood or a good mood. I have

a bus route in the morning. One boy I pick up at the first stop on his ranch is there on time at 7 a.m. sitting underneath a barn for me to pick him up every morning. It doesn't matter if it is cold, windy, raining, sleeting, or hot. He gets on and the first thing he says is good morning. Every morning. The next stop, I pick a kid up and her mom says good morning. I say it back and we talk about chickens and cattle. I go pick up another 20 kids. I could come up with a thousand problems on my mind, but this morning we talked about biscuits and gravy. Those kids joked with me and told me the school was having biscuits and gravy for breakfast. I was so excited when I got to school, then there wasn't any. They thought it was hilarious. That is the kind of conversations I get to have with kindergartners and first graders on the way to school. I told Julie, as I get older,

it means a whole lot more to me that I am essential. I see it even more now as a bus driver than as a teacher because those kids rely on me. Am I negative? You bet I am. Am I positive? You bet. But I have a choice. I don't have to say good morning, how are you, but it is the first connection they have that is directly related to that school," Les said.

Julie also loves it when she draws that connection with her students, particularly since she teaches an age group who tend to hold back at times.

"I love it when they ask me if I am going to come watch their games or they'll just talk to me about stuff going on in their lives. At that age, I don't get too many hugs, but a few of them will come up and hug me. It's just good to me that I am that person they want to come talk to," Julie explained. "I also have contact with kids I

taught years ago, and I enjoy seeing what they've done with their lives."

Les said it is always great when students contact their teachers after high school, and it is a great experience watching them grow into wonderful individuals.

"One of the most rewarding things is when I judge a child and I taught their parents and get to see them be successful with their families, being good mommas and daddies. It is not necessarily the stock shows or awards they won, just true friendships with kids I taught," Les said.

As for the future, the Harrises don't plan on going anywhere. Les has wanted to live in Nocona since he was a boy, and now that he's there, he's not leaving.

"We don't even need to go on vacation. Why would we? We go to Muenster, Nocona, Ringgold or Wichita Falls, but we don't want

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to go anywhere else for any vacation. I think that's why we're here. Plus, we raise our sheep and goats, and we are close to the Red River and Oklahoma," Les said.

The couple also has many plans in the works for their sheep and goat herd. They see many repeat customers and sell across four states, a testament to the quality of livestock they raise. They also raise livestock guardian dogs, who they both love very much. The couple adores receiving updated photos of their dogs from clients, along with images of their goats and sheep in shows.

The Harrises also remain close to family. As for their own kids, Katy graduated from Oklahoma State University in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in animal science. In November, she married Trey Glasscock, who owns Circle G. Livestock, and helps manage Glasscock Club Lambs with parents, Guy and Ann, in Zephyr, Texas. Coy recently graduated from Texas State Technical College in Waco with an associate degree in electrical lineman technology and went to work for Oncor. Les's cousins in the North Texas are more like siblings, giving them close family nearby, and Julie's parents are a short hour and a half drive away.

"On my way to work, I think about my life and how I worked at the largest FFA chapter in the United States, but now I can walk out my back door and see the ag barn of Prairie Valley and 40 head of cattle and be as close to agriculture as you can be. It's just soothing. Moving to North Texas was a dream come true. We trust God in everything we do. We let him have it all, and if you do the same, he'll take care of you. It might take a while sometimes, but you have to trust him," Les concluded.

To follow along the Harrises journey, visit their sheep and goat business page at Harris Show Lambs and Goats. 



(Above) Leslie and Julie Harris plan to continue teaching and remain in North Texas, which they love. They also have many plans in the works for their sheep and goat herd. (Left) Leslie Harris teaches a group of youngsters the importance of agriculture. (Photos courtesy Leslie and Julie Harris)





# JESSES JEWELZ

By Jesse Kader

We made it. Happy 2023! We are starting a new chapter with fresh, clean pages. We still may be looking at some cold months ahead, I personally don't rule out snow until after March. I have plenty of sweaters, jackets and layering pieces to get you through the next few months, and lots of fun things as we gear up for stock show season. Take a look and see what you might find. [www.jessesjewelz.com](http://www.jessesjewelz.com)



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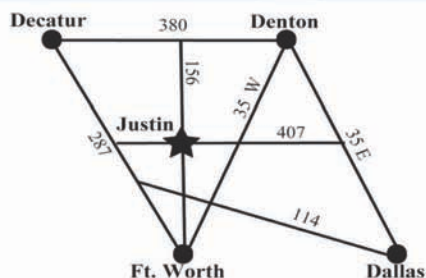
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# Lacey's Pantry

By Lacey Vilhauer

## Beef Empanadas

**Total Time:** 45 minutes | **Serves:** 6-7

### Ingredients:

1 package of pre-made pie crust (2 rolls) (or make your own dough!)

1 pound of lean ground beef- drained

1/4 cup diced onions

1/2 medium diced bell pepper, any color

1 teaspoon cumin

1 teaspoons minced garlic

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1 teaspoon chili powder

1 cup Mexican blended cheese

1 egg

### Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare a cookie sheet with a baking mat, non-stick foil, parchment paper or oil. Set aside.


In a large skillet cook ground beef, onions and bell pepper until beef

is cooked through, onions are translucent and peppers are soft. Drain any excess fat. Add cumin, garlic, salt, pepper, and chili powder to ground beef mixture and cook for 2 minutes. Remove from burner.

Roll out pie crusts. Using a bowl similar to a cereal bowl, trace circles onto each pie crust. I can get 3 per crust. A smaller bowl will result in more circles.

With leftover pie crust, mix together and roll out and continue cutting circles, until all dough is used. I can get 8 total. Lay a pie crust circle down on the prepared cookie sheet. Add 2 to 3 tablespoons of filling to the middle of the circle.

Top with 1 tablespoon cheese, do not overfill.

Fold pie crust circle in half, keeping the filling inside, and press edges down with a fork. Repeat steps 9 and 10 for all empanadas. Arrange empanadas on a cookie sheet. Beat egg in a small bowl and brush on top of each empanada. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until the tops are golden. Remove from the oven and serve with your favorite salads, salsas and guacamole. 



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“Who’s Bed Have You’re Boots Been Under” and “Man I Feel Like A Woman,” you’ll quickly find yourself back to the 90s country music rage. Not only that, she even rides in on horseback.

The entire show takes me back to the Houston Rodeo Days when I first met and worked with Shania and believe me, when she sees this fantastic act in person, she’s gonna flip.

Keep your eye out this spring for your opportunity to catch “Shania Twang” in person.

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# Adaptability: Moving Forward, Part 2

By Martha Crump | marthacrump@comcell.net,

**M**As promised, this month will be a look at how 2022 has prepared us to move forward. While we have all been busy with our cattle enterprises, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association has been busy doing the public relations job we do not have the time or expertise to pursue. The Federation of State Beef Councils is a division of the NCBA and a contractor to the Beef Checkoff. The Federation represents the 44 Qualified State Beef Councils and includes more than 700 state board members representing every segment of the beef industry.

Their vision is "To build beef demand by inspiring, unifying and supporting an effective state and national Checkoff partnership." They also push for strong state and national partnerships which result in increased consumer demand for beef and higher consumer confidence.

In 2022, \$4.5 million was contributed by the Federation to supplement the approximately \$40 million national plan the Beef Promotion Operating Committee put forth for promotion, research, industry information, and consumer information.

The "Beef. It's What's For Dinner," campaign saw celebrity athlete Tony Romo as the newest spokesperson throughout the year. There are definite pluses to using a well-known spokesperson. According to market research, it can increase sales, help to develop brand awareness, lend credibility to the advertising campaign and even attract new customers. Romo worked to promote beef nationally via digital and social media, through outdoor ads, and on ESPN.com. He was on broadcast television on the Food Network, HGTV and the Magnolia Network. State



beef councils also extended this national programming.

2022 was the second year for the Federation to also sponsor the "Beef. It's What's For Dinner 300," which was the 41st season-opening race for the NASCAR Xfinity Series at Daytona.

Beef also appeared on television during the 2022 holiday season with more than 125 ads on the Hallmark Channel which reached an estimated 112 million adults. The Hallmark.com digital advertising resulted in approximately 2.2 million digital impressions. Social media presence saw the inclusion of new Hanukkah content which featured brisket recipes and a roasting video series on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter that had a reach of 32,000 and generated 3,000 engagements. A continuation of online engagements kept beef very present during the holidays. Eleven different

food and agriculture influencers posted content during December. Amazingly, the 30-plus posts were responsible for a reach of 933,228 and almost 45,000 engagements. Basically what is being counted here is not only the number of individuals that "liked" the posts but also the number of people that went on to interact with the content.

**\$745,000 was spent to support foundation research projects.**

The areas of research included product quality, beef safety, human nutrition, beef sustainability and market research.

**\$2,439,000 was utilized for consumer information.**

One of these marketing projects involved a nationwide club store promoting beef and the "Beef. It's What's For Dinner," brand during the holidays on the retailer's digital properties. These digital ads were placed on the

website and utilized an app that directed the consumers to a page where they could add beef to their cart. There were almost 40,000 consumers that interacted with the ads, resulting in more than \$8 million in beef sales and 8.6 percent new buyers in the beef category. Basically, the bottom line showed that for every Checkoff dollar spent on the project, \$42.72 was returned in beef sales.

In the quest to help get good information into the hands of consumers, more than 3,000 Pediatric Health Professional In-Office Educational Toolkits were distributed in 32 states. This was done in an attempt to emphasize the importance of Beef as a nutrient dense food for infants and toddlers. The challenge historically has been how to get the newest, most reliable research out and into the hands of the layperson and professional alike. It is particularly difficult for health and medical experts.

They are required to participate in a set number of continuing medical education hours every year in order to maintain their licenses or credentials, but busy work schedules often make it difficult to accomplish. Recently, board-certified general pediatrician Candice Jones, MD, partnered with the Federation to create a four-part podcast series called "Making Every Bite Count."

This series was accredited for medical doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and registered dietitians and highlighted the importance of beef in the early diet to support infant and childhood development. Since its release more than 2,800 participants have listened with 85 percent of these listeners being medical professionals that have direct contact





with patients. The success of this effort demonstrates the value of podcasts in health education, but also the innovation of sharing beef's nutritional message through newer formats.

### **\$150,000 went toward industry information.**

This included the Masters of Beef Advocacy Program which reached 20,000 graduates. This free, self-guided online course provides farmers, ranchers, service providers, consumers, and all beef community members with the tools and resources they need to become beef advocates and answer tough questions about beef production. This funding also included the new Trailblazers program. This yearlong training program was developed to enable participants to "promote beef to new audiences while addressing and correcting myths" and to become expert communicators who excelled in media interviews and in building confidence in the beef industry when talking to consumers.

Now I do not know about anybody else, but I sure do not have the budget or the expertise in these fields to add that to my list of duties here on the ranch. I sure do not begrudge the monies going to support the Beef Checkoff while they work on all of this to help make my place in the industry a little more secure. Goodness knows that as 2022 came to an end, we needed some things to go right. So what is the forecast going forward? We have all seen the increased prices across the board for all goods, including food.

This will definitely continue to play a big role in consumer purchasing practices. We are seeing inflation rates equivalent to the early 1980s, and it is alarming for all. We are seeing a trend toward less dining out, and even though households are dining at home more, the average consumer is purchasing fewer pounds of beef than they were last year,

while spending more per pound on that beef. The good news is that research into market trends does indicate that the consumer's willingness to pay for beef does remain strong and that they still find value in buying beef.

How consumers shop is changing as well. During the pandemic, we all learned how to do more online forms of shopping, even for groceries. E-commerce is full of growth potential that has remained post-pandemic. From click and pick-up to home delivery, consumers like the ease of this form of shopping. One year ago, in December 2021, 63 percent of surveyed consumers preferred home delivery, while 37 percent preferred the click and collect method. Beef has had a successful role in the online shopping trend, with 44 percent of customers including beef in their online carts. E-commerce is projected to more than double in the next three to five years.

No look forward would be complete without spending just a minute to discuss those villainous "meat substitutes." We would be remiss to not conduct a quick assessment of how that market is faring. After all, they claim to be a serious contender against the real thing - beef.

As of Aug. 13, 2022, fresh meat alternatives comprised less than one percent of both the entire fresh protein retail market (0.34 percent) and the fresh beef retail market (0.54 percent). Comparatively, beef currently occupies 54 percent of the fresh protein market and occupied almost 56 percent during the same time in 2021. Here is the good news for beef producers; market share for fake meat has also been declining for the past two years, with a more than 20 percent drop from 2021 to 2022.

So what do our consumers think about our profession and our products? Well, the news is good on that front. The NCBA is

diligent in consistently monitoring to better understand consumer perceptions of how we are doing our jobs. These perceptions do drive consumer demands. Overall, beef perceptions are solid with 68 percent of respondents claiming a positive view on beef.

Only 13 percent responded as having a negative perception of beef. When asked about beef production perceptions, nearly half of the respondents at 42 percent claimed to have a positive perception. Thirty-seven percent claimed a neutral perception, and 21 percent claimed a negative perception. The outcome of these responses was interesting.

The respondents were asked to describe concerns regarding beef cattle production. Fifty-one percent claimed to be concerned about animal welfare. Surprisingly, only five percent mentioned the environment as a concern. Only 27 percent of respondents claimed to know how cattle were raised for food. This makes it quite clear that consumers have very little knowledge about cattle production and about how many regulations are in place to ensure animals are raised with respect and care.

2022 saw a strong foreign demand for United States beef, at a 33 percent increase from 2021. Marbled beef is gaining in popularity in Asia and Latin America, and for cattle producers exports just by themselves account for an average of \$476.98 in value per head. While the United States does import lean beef trimmings to combine with our fattier beef to make hamburgers, we remain a net exporter, meaning we export more than we import. NCBA will "continue to identify and remove barriers and diversify our export markets."

A couple of issues you would be wise to keep abreast of for the coming year would include a little peek at what the Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Gary Gensler is play-

ing with in ESG investing. ESG refers to environmental, social and governance. Europe has played with this to crippling effects economically.

Another growing area of interest is that of selling carbon credits. While this emerging market has the possibility to offer opportunities to ranchers, it will be important to weigh the costs, benefits, risks, and to know enough to make an informed decision.

As for the market update, it is predicted that the beef-cow herd liquidation we saw in 2022, may continue due to the current weather forecast that shows the La Nina weather pattern to continue until possibly this summer.

We have experienced a lot of change in a short time, and we have assessed, grown, adapted, looked backward, and now we are once again looking forward. It is not always easy, but most things worthwhile are not. Thank goodness we have advocates like the NCBA, Beef Checkoff and others working around the clock for us being a voice and a presence where we cannot.

The next meeting of the WFACW organization will be Feb. 21, 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. The evening meeting will start at 5:30 p.m., so that members attending have time to order their meal, followed by the business meeting at 6 p.m. Location for the evening meeting has not yet been decided. As the meeting time nears, please feel free to email [marthacrump@comcell.net](mailto:marthacrump@comcell.net) or go to the WFACW Facebook page for additional information.

### **Sources:**

*National Cattlemen, 2022 Directions; The Official Publication Of NCBA*

[NCBA.org](http://NCBA.org)



# Confessions of a HUNTER

By Andy Anderson

## Bat Fishing Crazy

It was summer, school was out, and my best friend Chris came to stay the weekend. Chris and I were about 12 years old, knew everything and weren't scared of anything. We never stayed in the house, we were always running around the ranch, through the creeks, fishing, hunting or building something.

It was a typical hot summer day, we had been taking it easy at the stock tank, got bored and jumped in for some swimming to cool off. It was fun to dive down to the bottom where the water turned colder, dig our hands into the mud and hold on as long as we could.

The water was cold enough that after a few dives we would actually get the chills. It was a great way to cool down; of course, the water was so red, we couldn't open our eyes and our shorts would be stained red and nothing could wash it out.

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

They were younger and an-



Andy Anderson and his best friend, Chris, spent summers as a child outside, running around the ranch, fishing, hunting, or building something.

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

"Get in the house and get cleaned up for dinner, and throw

those shorts away, they are ruined," she said.

Chris and I ventured into the house to get cleaned up about the time the girls realized we had arrived. We tore into some pork chops, fried potatoes and fresh green beans with homemade yeast rolls. I loved those rolls, warm with butter dripping from the inside. Man, Chris and I were happy to eat outside just to get away from the chatter and annoying pestering by the girls.

We had a spot near a small shed that was slightly lit from the security light on the telephone pole

nearby. It was just out of sight, but close enough to still hear when it was time to come in for the night; plus, the girls didn't like it and left us alone.

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

I turned to look in the direction he was staring as he described seeing something big flying around the big security light. I peered into the darkness, around the hue of the



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

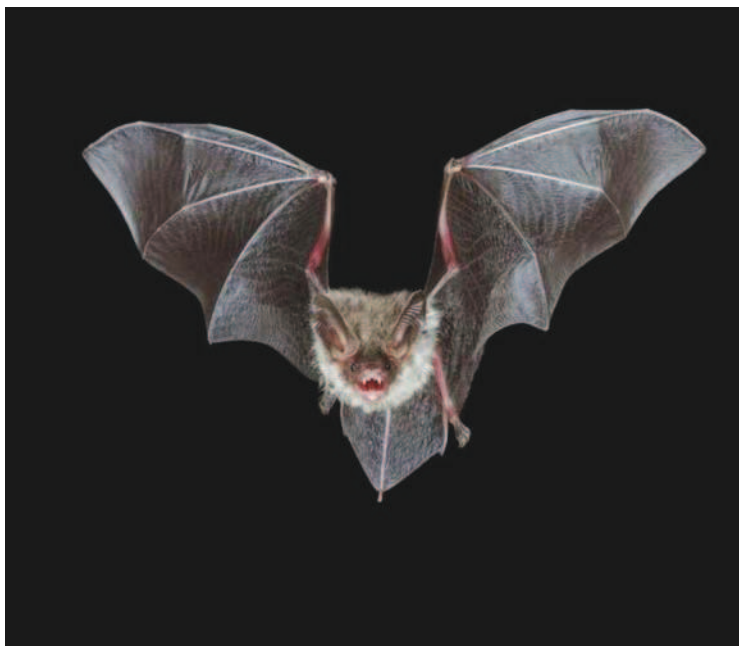
He was excited and was very serious. After a few more seconds staring into the light, I saw it. It was quick, it was big and it dang sure wasn't a bug.

Chris and I eased up to the light using the side of the house as cover to mask our presence. We stood there in the shadows of the house waiting to catch a glimpse of what was flying around. It didn't take long and there it was again, so fast in and out of the light we couldn't tell for sure, had to be some kind of bird, we argued. Then, almost as if it wanted to be seen, it appeared and hovered right smack dab in the middle of the light, a bat.

Just then a few more could be seen flying around. We crept up closer, ever so excited to see these bats in action. Flying around at Mach 1, snatching bugs from the air. Spectacular to watch, almost hypnotic to watch the bats doing acrobatics through the air, and every now and then you could hear them squeaking.

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

Now, how in the heck were we going to do that? After much deliberation and a few failed at-



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

tempts, I said "Let's get a fishing pole, tie a rooster tail on and try casting up there."

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

Chris decided we needed something lighter and with no hooks. We retreated to the barn to dig through the tackle box.

After a few minutes, Chris devised a plan. He cut a small chunk of cloth from a rag he found, took a small weight he found in the tackle box, centered it in the middle of the cloth and tied the fishing line around the bottom of the weight with the cloth folded over it. It looked like a miniature ghost when he finished.

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

yelled out, "I got one."

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

Chris was walking to me yelling at me to grab it, and as he was getting closer, I was backing up. Just as I came to the corner of the house, Chris managed to pull the bat down to eye level. I reached in to try and grab it as it nearly took the top of my head off. I ducked down, glancing back up just in time to see a herd of girls rounding the corner of the house.

Now, these fine young ladies had no idea what was going on. All they knew is they had heard Chris and me and as far as they were concerned, they had found us; and found us they did. Chris brought the bat around for a second attempt for me to catch it just as the girls

came to stop near me, all of them starring at Chris, in the middle of the road, with a fishing pole, dancing around like a fool.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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# Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean | [tonydean.tx1@gmail.com](mailto:tonydean.tx1@gmail.com)

## Eastern Red Cedar

**H**ave you ever noticed that we drive by objects or issues every day out on the land but we don't really "see" these objects? They are there, but we don't allow them to register in our minds. I suspect that this scenario exists more than we might want to admit.

Don't let Eastern red cedar be one of these ghost objects. Although it is a Texas native, it has become quite invasive and we should be keeping an eye on it. This increase in numbers appears to be the result of two events. First, an increase in acres of overgrazed rangeland opens the door for establishment of more brush species, and, second, the reduction of natural fire events allows more seedlings to establish and become mature trees.

It is fairly easy to recognize Eastern red cedar because, as it matures, it takes on a pyramidal Christmas tree shape. Fruit is a pale blue berry ranging in diameter from 1/4" to 3/8". Trees grow from 20' to 30' in height and occasionally to 50'. It is the most commonly known eastern conifer and is found in 37 states.

Eastern red cedar small trees can be killed with prescribed burning. Trees will not resprout if cut off at ground level.

This species is used extensively for windbreak planting and for other ornamental uses. It is widely available for purchase through commercial outlets. Such uses around farmsteads could be partially responsible for increased populations on grazing lands.

**Continued on page 50**



Eastern red cedar has served many uses for centuries, including being a Christmas tree.





These berries on Eastern red cedar are good food value for many birds and small mammals, but the plant is of little value for livestock. (Photos courtesy Tony Dean)

**Continued from page 49**

Although it bears watching to prevent over populations, Eastern red cedar does have a few redeeming qualities:

1. It can establish on poor dry soils, alkaline soil, and dry rocky outcrops, thereby contributing to stabilizing these areas.
2. Due to its tolerance of windy conditions, it was planted in wind-breaks to offset dust bowl conditions of the 1930s.
3. Eastern red cedar is resistant to extremes of drought, heat, and cold.
4. It is salt tolerant and can be

**Grazing Value of This Plant**

**Eastern Red Cedar**



- Eastern red cedar is not used by cattle and lightly used by deer, sheep, and goats.

used near roads, driveways, and sidewalks.

5. The fruit is eaten by many species of songbirds and small mammals.


Eastern red cedar provides little

value to livestock and wildlife other than shelter from extremes in weather and food value for birds.

Eastern red cedars are dioecious, which means that male and female are separate trees.

This species has a very long history of medicinal and food value uses on two continents. Eastern red cedar occurs both in Europe and North America. Native Americans used it for a long list of health issues, and a publication printed in England in 1636 described it used as a diuretic.

Eastern red cedar is an interesting species, having a long history of serving people on two continents.

But, like many things in life, it is not of good use if it exists as a dominant part of grazing lands. Moderation is the goal. 





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# THE GARDEN GUY

By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker

## Time to Think Valentine's, The Hibiscus of Your Dreams

Though the first words have barely hit this column I am getting a sense of glee. Just think it took a garden writer, The Garden Guy, to beat the big boys to Valentine's. When you see Valentine's stuff the day after Christmas just remember where you saw it first.

In truth I'm not trying to sell you Valentine's stuff now but to alert you to the most beautiful new hibiscus making its debut in the spring, Summerific Valentine's Crush. The competition will be so great for this plant you need to bribe your garden center now to get in the game, so to speak, and order them.

You may have thought Summerific Holy Grail or Summerific Cranberry Crush was the ultimate achievement in red shade hibiscus but I predict Summerific Valentine's Crush will reign at the pinnacle for quite some period of time. The seven-inch flowers open to reveal a bright cherry red with a dark center. This is the red of your dreams, the red that makes you think so tropical you will be fooling not only your friends and neighbors but Mother Nature too.

Summerific Valentine's Crush and Summerific Lilac Crush are making their debut in 2023 bringing the series to a dazzling 12-selections. This is my fourth year in a row to be growing Summerific  
**Continued on page 54**



This Summerific Berry Awesome is growing in less than perfect light but produces enough flowers that will catch your eye. (Photo courtesy Norman Winter)




hibiscus or rose mallow. As I regularly tell you I am sun challenged but the performance has gotten better and better each year. This year I had blooms from mid-June until late August. My sunlight challenge means I will never have those catalogue photos with 50-plus blooms, but I will have enough to make me happy and delight watching you grab your camera.

But I want to go back to the tropical look that may fool Mother Nature. While I am guilty of choosing the varieties to do that, and even more so when combined with bananas and giant alocasia elephant ears, I want to challenge your design creativity with those Summerific colors that immediately tell you it is a hardy hibiscus. Get one thing in your mind and that is hardy hibiscus is a good thing, it's not cheap or dime store but a wonderful partner for your other annuals and perennials. They are cold hardy from zones 4-9, meaning just about everyone can grow them.

Take for instance the award winning Summerific Cherry Choco Latte. Not for a nano-second will you think tropical but the white light pink flowers that look drizzled with dark cherry from the center outward will take your breath away. In my garden I have Summerific Berry Awesome combined with Heart to Heart Bottle Rocket caladiums and Summerific Spin-drella with Heart to Heart Tickle Me Pink caladiums, Shadowland Etched Glass hotstas and the green leaf texture of Dandy Man Color Wheel rhododendrons that bloomed early in the season.

The Summerific series of hardy hibiscus are put together with native DNA. While you may struggle with creating the perfect garden soil with most other plants these could also be classified as suitable for bogs. But you don't need a bog, a mountain or a compost pile and I am proving you can be happy under sunlight challenges. In the south I am finding the four-foot tall and four-foot wide structure to be just perfect. Prior to spring shoots, the plants will be cut back to almost ground level.

If your garden center doesn't take bribes that I mentioned at the start then use this time before spring to source your plants elsewhere including online. A few years ago, I got some Summerific plants that were bareroot. I potted-them up, and by planting season they looked like full grown two-gallon nursery plants. I promise you can do it too, if this is your only option. Follow me on Facebook @Norman-WinterTheGardenGuy for more photos and garden inspiration. 



Summerific Valentine's Crush hardy hibiscus is making its debut in 2023. It is cold hardy from zones 4-9.



Hardy hibiscus like this Summerific Cranberry Crush are perfect complements to your other annuals and perennials. (Photos courtesy Norman Winter)





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**FORT WORTH, TX-** One-of-a-kind property close to Fort Worth! 6.69-acre horse property with spacious open floor plan with indoor grill and second kitchen. Beautiful views from porches, patios with stone walkways and gazebo to watch the sunset and wildlife. Fenced paddocks with sheds, auto waters. 60-foot round pen. Great barn with metal roof, water and electricity, large tack room with office space. covered trailer parking. Well with booster pumps and auxiliary tank. Custom gates. This property is one of a kind, book your showing today!! Motivated seller! \$960,000. Bobby Norris **817-291-0759**. Hayden Outdoors, The Brand That Sells the Land. **www.HaydenOutdoors.com**

**CHISHOLM TRAIL ESTATES** - 12-16 acre lots available located just off of FM 1759 and Gray Road minutes from downtown Nocona, TX. New road build and underground utilities already installed. These small tracts are ideal for new home builds. Deed restrictions will apply. \$12,500 per acre. Red River Realty, 301 W. Hwy 82, Nocona, TX. **940-825-7000**. **www.redriver-realty.com**

**HALLETTSVILLE OLIVE GROVE** - Lavaca County, TX. \$1,000,000. 78.79 acres. Stacy Mueller **512-757-3566**. Hayden Outdoors. **www.HaydenOutdoors.com..**

**CROCKETT RANCH** - 354 +/- Acres, Bowie, Texas. Premier horse & hunting facility. 7,280 +/- sqft custom home w/ outdoor entertaining spaces, covered arena w/stalls, apartment & office. Guest home, covered round pen, loafing sheds, shop, cattle working pens, dog kennels, lake stocked with trophy bass, located on the Chisholm Trail and one of the highest elevation points in Montague County. Listing price \$5,700,000. Van Baize **940-366-3407**. **BufordResources.com**

**RINGGOLD, TX** - 95.5 +/- acres. \$955,000. \$10,000/ac. For more information call Van Baize **940-366-3407**. **www.bufordresources.com**.

**REIS FARM** - 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, native pasture both wooded and open, level to sloping terrain, seasonal creek, stock pond, no oil production. \$595,000. Turner Country Properties. Call **940-636-7039**.

**MEGARGEL, TX** - 5+- to 30+- acres This is an ideal location for a commercial park or a start up company location. Located on the only state hwy in the immediate area. Between two municipalities. Great investment potential. Additional acreage available. \$2,943,000 Bobby Norris **817-291-0759**. Hayden Outdoors, The Brand That Sells the Land. **www.HaydenOutdoors.com**

**KR RANCH ESTATES** - Splendid location only three miles from beautiful downtown Nocona. The KR Ranch Estates located east of Nocona is the desired area to build your brand new home! On the property you will see a new pipe entrance installed and perimeter barbing fencing. This tract has been cleared of overgrowth and is ready for a new build. Red River Realty, 301 W. Hwy 82, Nocona, TX. **940-825-7000**. **www.redriver-realty.com**

**233 CHUCKWAGON TRAIL** - Tarrant County, TX. 6.69 acres. \$9,600,000. Bobby Norris **817-291-0759**. Hayden Outdoors. **www.HaydenOutdoors.com**.

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**AL SALINAS FENCING** - All types of fencing, braces, gates, cattle guards, livestock shelters, carports, pre-made braces, Apollo gate openers. **940-577-0878**. **alsalinasfencing.com**. 03c

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**YOUR AD COULD GO HERE**-Call Kathy at **940-872-2076** today!





## “Are Y’all Primitive Camping Out Here?”

By Jelly Cocanougher

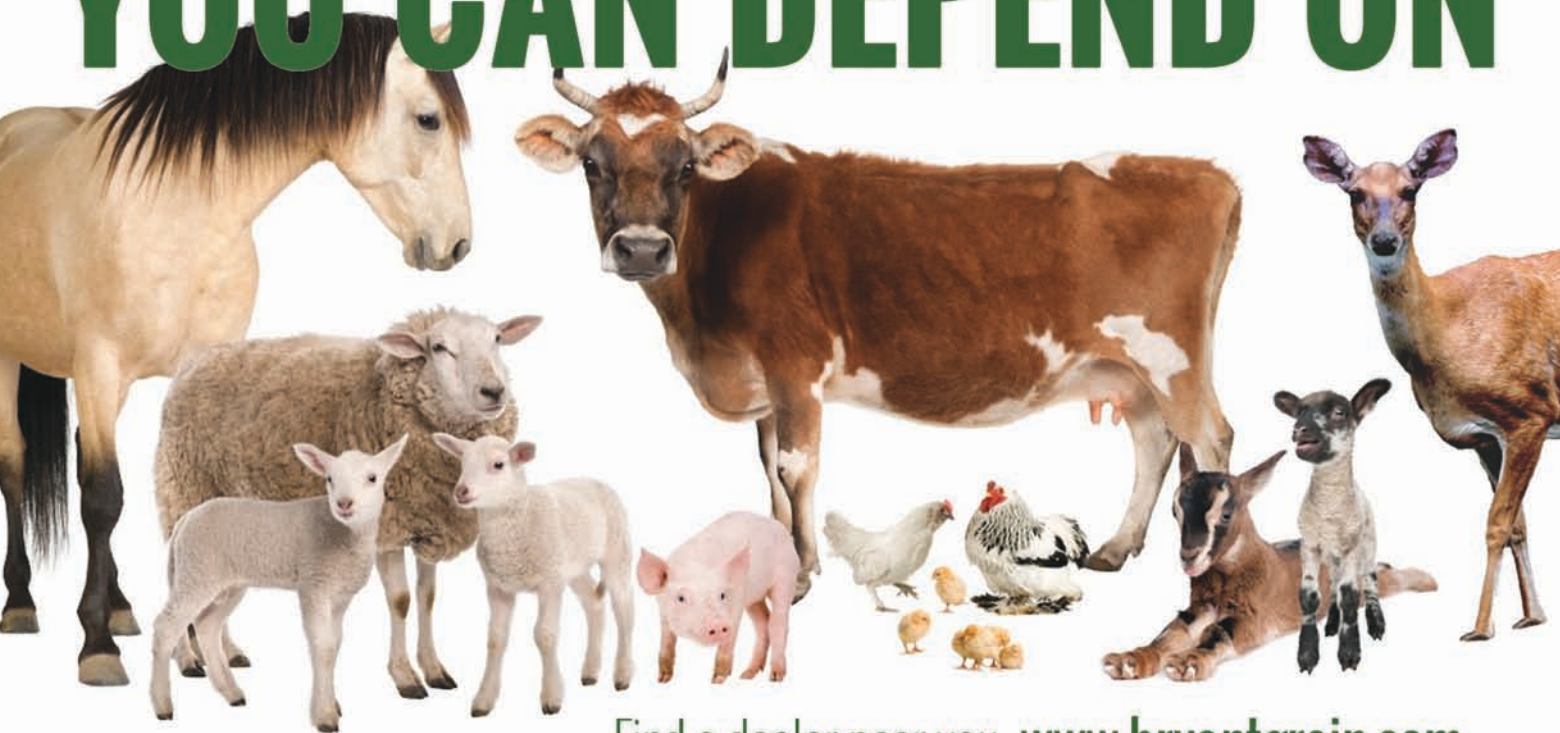
With a discouraging and worrisome look, the park rangers moved along, back towards the trailhead entrance. We must have had Texan written across our faces, headstrong and willing to make our own decisions when faced. They were worried we would get lost as night fell to the base of the mountains.

But we were used to hiking in the night, where the trail is ours and the moon is our light. It’s too hot in Texas to hike during the day, leaving us to become nocturnal most evenings.

The most charming and surreal moments are when everyone returns to their vehicles and you’re in the wilderness alone.🇺🇸



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