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Volume 11, Issue 4

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ON THE COVER

On the cover are Josh and Brittani Halsell. The couple own and operate Halsell Equine, where Josh trains horses and Brittani works as a farrier, shoeing hunter jumpers. (Photo by Dani Blackburn)



letter from the editor

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

We celebrate Independence Day this month, a tradition dating back to July 4, 1776, that commemorates the passage of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress.

It was my favorite holiday as a child because it meant a day out on the lake with family and friends, wrapped up by an evening of spectacular fireworks. As an adult, it remains one of my favorite days of the year, but now it is a time to reflect on how truly blessed we are to worship, speak freely, and value true independence.

In this month's profile, we bring you Brittani Halsell, farrier, and her husband, Josh, a horse trainer. I hope you enjoy learning about them and their craft as much as I did. Turn the pages to read more about land sales for the month of May, discover more about the plants in your pasture, and find out what is happening on the ranch.

To subscribe by mail call 940-872-5922. Make sure to like our Facebook page and follow us on Instagram and X, and don't forget to sign up for our weekly newsletter at ntfronline.com. Wishing you all a very Happy July!

Dani Blackburn

Dani Blackburn, Editor
editor@ntfronline.com



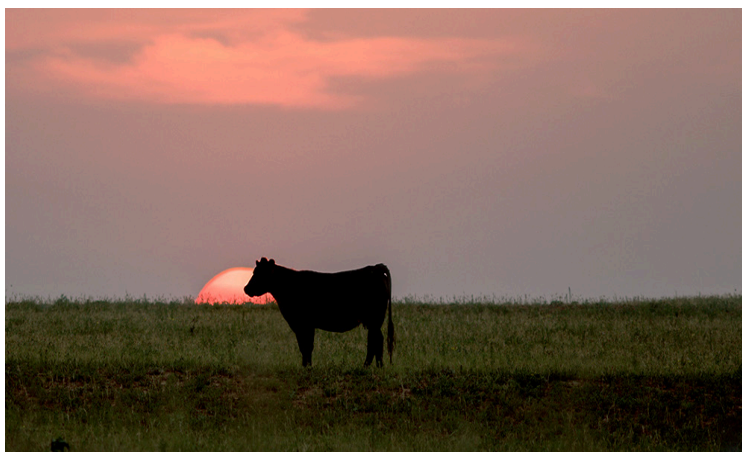
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Disease Traceability

A new rule has been released that requires cattle and bison to be identified with tags that are visual and electronic.

31

A Memorial Roping

The annual Windy Ryon roping was held on Memorial weekend, May 24-26, in Saginaw, featuring exciting competition.

45

Lessons from a Pit Bull

Dal Houston has always liked dogs. Until recent years, the only dogs he did not like were pit bulls, but that all changed.

48

On the Road

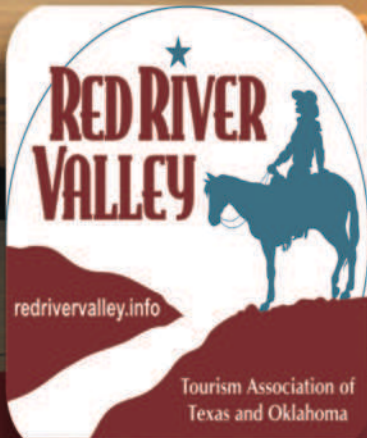
Mike Markwardt is doing his part to ensure the next generation of Texans know the importance of Texas music.

52

The Garden Guy

The Garden Guy sounds the call for petunias, summer's favorite flowers, and they are trumpet shaped, of course.

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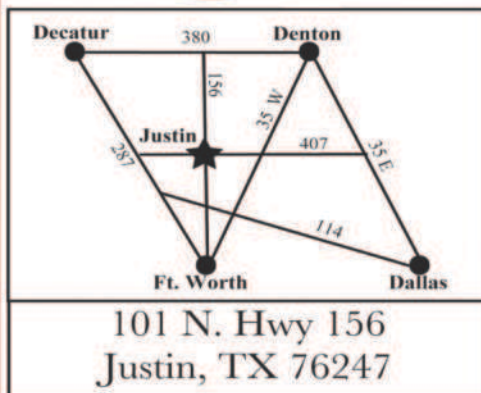
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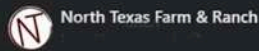


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Rural land sales are continuing on a steady pace for early spring, with prices holding very strong with the sell-to-list price ratios remaining very high, even on properties that have been on the market for a longer than usual time period.

READ MORE: <https://ntfronline.com/.../land-market-report-march-land.../>



X FEED



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Having backyard poultry is a popular agriculture enterprise. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, 0.8 percent of all households in the United States have chickens.

ntfronline.com/2024/04/hazard...



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MEANWHILE BACK AT THE RANCH

By Rayford Pullen | rcpullen@yahoo.com

As we prepare to enter the seventh month of the year, it is unbelievable how wonderful our weather and rains have been as it relates to forage production. If history holds true, 75 percent of our forage production for the year will occur by July 15 when the dog days of summer set in with decreased rainfall and higher temperatures, which not only limit growth but quality as well.

But up until now, it has been a wonderful ride when the weather and the cattle markets are figured together.

As July makes its appearance, we see hay supplies very adequate and our stock water in earthen tanks in great shape.

Our cows have been breeding back and the calves are growing like a weed while our pastures are recovering from the lingering drought from the past two years. In combination with our weed control, our pastures are on the fast road to recovery.

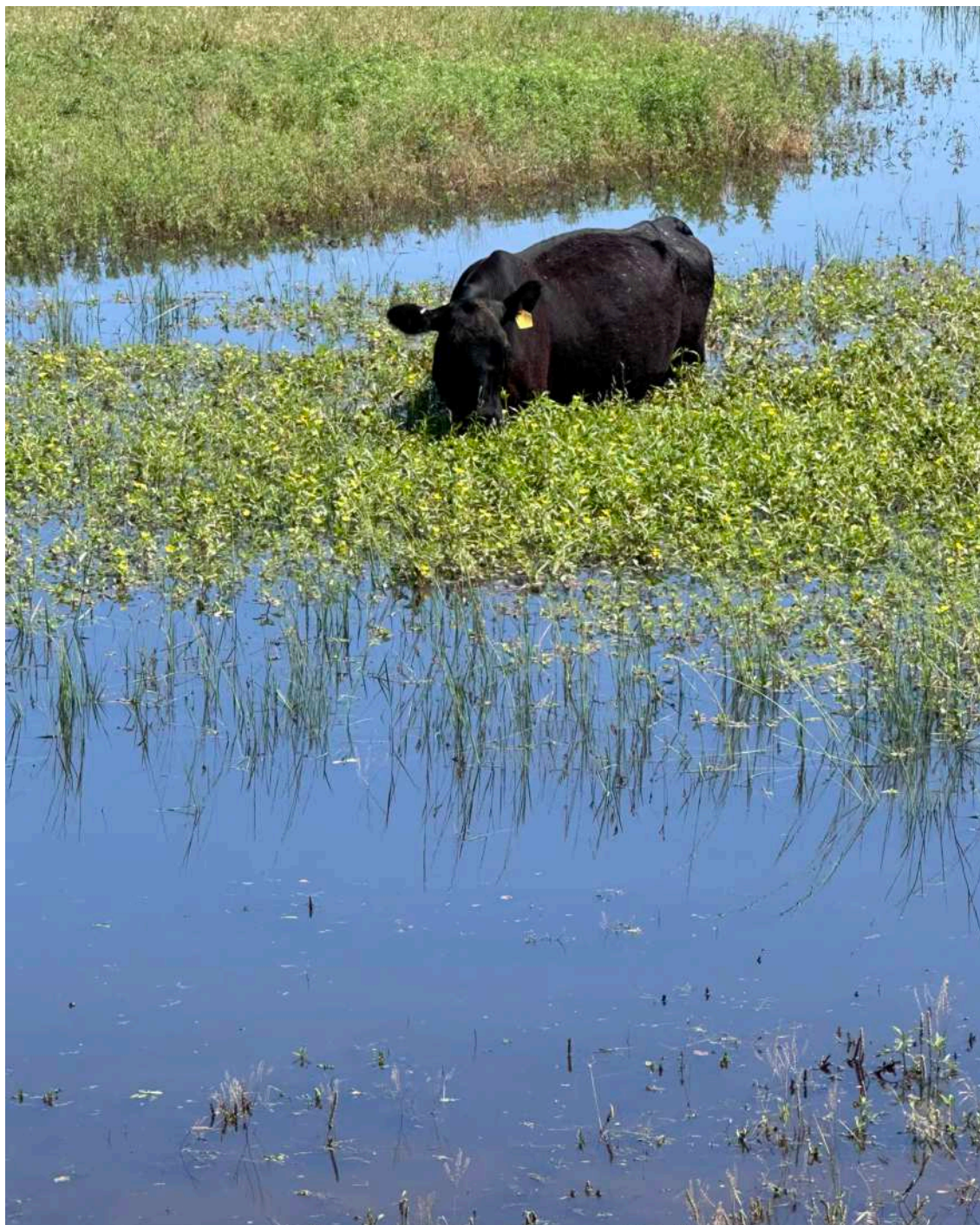
With our cattle healthy and calves in excellent shape, now we turn our attention to putting hay together for next year and making plans for fall as it relates to winter pastures, sire selection, and culling or replacing cows.

If any of us could identify the cows breeding back later or those that raise the lightest calves or even the open cows, we could probably increase our profitability by at least 20 percent.

With the current cattle market, that's a lot of difference in our bottom line.

This all is a lot easier said than done, especially if you have large numbers of cattle. We all need to get a better handle on our factory (cows) because without records it's all a guess.

Now is also a great time to



As July makes its appearance, we see hay supplies very adequate and our stock water in earthen tanks in great shape. (Photo courtesy Rayford Pullen)



spend time with our families and take a little time to stay current on keeping up to date with what's

going on in the world of cattle production.


Don't get too busy cutting trees

that you forget to sharpen your ax.

It's a wonderful time to be in the cattle business. NTFR





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AG *elsewhere* MONTANA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK




People are finishing up brandings. Here, Danny Walter is shown getting it done. 

AG *elsewhere* WYOMING

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY TRESSA LAWRENCE



Ranchers across northeast Wyoming and the surrounding areas saw record moisture levels in 2023. The year 2024 has seen significantly less moisture to date. 

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DAM Side: Skipper W. Pete McCue, Dewitt Bar by Three Bars, Bright Bar by Three Bars, Royal Bar by Three Bars, Joe Hancock, Leo by Joe Reed II by Joe Reed, Wagner's Rainy Day, Question Mark by Plaudit by King Plaudit TB by Plaudit TB (Kentucky Derby Winner), Questionaire (Belmont Stakes Winner)

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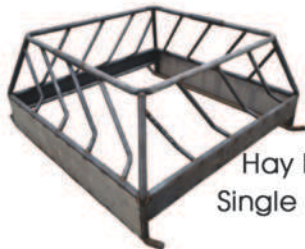
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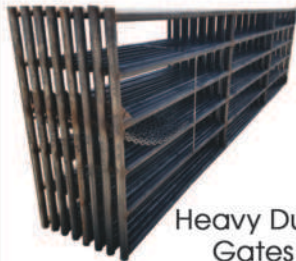
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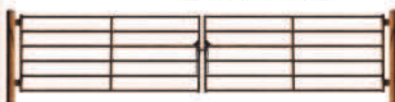
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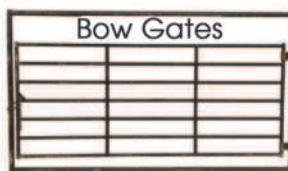
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# Land Market Report

## MAY LAND SALES

By Jared Groce

We have been praying for rain for a long time, and now we have it. Our hearts go out to all of those who have suffered so badly from the terrible storms in North Texas and Southern Oklahoma so far this year. These tragedies remind us that we can lose it all in just a matter of seconds.

The rural land market has been predictably unpredictable this election year, as it is every four years. The political uncertainty of an election year has a history of making the real estate market “odd” during the election year, and it is typically alleviated the day after the election – regardless of who wins. While there are certainly transactions taking place, it seems to be varied in location, size of tracts, and price per acre with no rhyme or reason. One of the very few consistencies that I am seeing is that the majority of land sales are smaller tracts, with very few 50-plus acre tracts being traded right now.

Remember, the best time to plant a tree or buy land was 20 years ago. The second best time is today. 

| COUNTY   | AREA        | ACRES  | \$ ACRE       | LIST \$         | SOLD \$         | SALE / LIST | DOM |
|----------|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-----|
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 10     | \$ 18,500.00  | \$ 225,000.00   | \$ 185,000.00   | 82.20%      | 649 |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 10.41  | \$ 31,607.00  | \$ 350,000.00   | \$ 329,000.00   | 94.00%      | 589 |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 10     | \$ 35,000.00  | \$ 384,000.00   | \$ 350,000.00   | 91.10%      | 173 |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 13     | \$ 26,923.00  | \$ 390,000.00   | \$ 350,000.00   | 89.70%      | 79  |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 41.46  | \$ 12,735.00  | \$ 535,000.00   | \$ 528,000.00   | 98.70%      | 271 |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 52.81  | \$ 15,481.00  | \$ 925,000.00   | \$ 817,545.00   | 88.40%      | 3   |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 31     | \$ 30,968.00  | \$ 1,100,000.00 | \$ 960,000.00   | 87.30%      | 21  |
| COOKE    | GAINESVILLE | 133.37 | \$ 8,998.00   | \$ 1,950,000.00 | \$ 1,200,000.00 | 61.50%      | 300 |
| COOKE    | VALLEY VIEW | 41.5   | \$ 28,916.00  | \$ 1,500,000.00 | \$ 1,200,000.00 | 80.00%      | 86  |
| AVG      |             | 38.17  | \$ 23,236.00  | \$ 817,667.00   | \$ 657,727.00   | 85.90%      | 241 |
| COUNTY   | AREA        | ACRES  | \$ ACRE       | LIST \$         | SOLD \$         | SALE / LIST | DOM |
| DENTON   | SANGER      | 25     | \$ 34,590.00  | \$ 995,000.00   | \$ 864,745.00   | 86.90%      | 51  |
| DENTON   | JUSTIN      | 45     | \$ 20,000.00  | \$ 950,000.00   | \$ 900,000.00   | 94.70%      | 282 |
| DENTON   | KRUM        | 44.88  | \$ 22,284.00  | \$ 1,200,715.00 | \$ 1,000,000.00 | 83.30%      | 765 |
| DENTON   | AUBREY      | 14.41  | \$ 123,213.00 | \$ 2,000,000.00 | \$ 1,775,000.00 | 88.80%      | 86  |
| DENTON   | PONDER      | 22     | \$ 84,455.00  | \$ 1,916,640.00 | \$ 1,858,000.00 | 96.90%      | 52  |
| DENTON   | SANGER      | 74.48  | \$ 34,194.00  | \$ 2,546,750.00 | \$ 2,546,750.00 | 100.00%     | 2   |
| DENTON   | ARGYLE      | 12.17  | \$ 234,182.00 | \$ 3,500,000.00 | \$ 2,850,000.00 | 81.40%      | 113 |
| AVG      |             | 33.99  | \$ 78,988.00  | \$ 1,872,729.00 | \$ 1,684,928.00 | 90.30%      | 193 |
| COUNTY   | AREA        | ACRES  | \$ ACRE       | LIST \$         | SOLD \$         | SALE / LIST | DOM |
| MONTAGUE | RINGGOLD    | 12.8   | \$ 7,813.00   | \$ 110,000.00   | \$ 100,000.00   | 90.90%      | 703 |
| MONTAGUE | NOCONA      | 12     | \$ 12,700.00  | \$ 152,400.00   | \$ 152,400.00   | 100.00%     | 1   |
| MONTAGUE | SUNSET      | 13.1   | \$ 13,359.00  | \$ 196,500.00   | \$ 175,000.00   | 89.10%      | 7   |
| MONTAGUE | SUNSET      | 13.1   | \$ 14,794.00  | \$ 196,500.00   | \$ 193,800.00   | 98.60%      | 5   |
| MONTAGUE | NOCONA      | 25.8   | \$ 9,650.00   | \$ 265,468.00   | \$ 248,970.00   | 93.80%      | 230 |
| MONTAGUE | SAINT JO    | 24.82  | \$ 11,000.00  | \$ 273,020.00   | \$ 273,020.00   | 100.00%     | 11  |
| MONTAGUE | NOCONA      | 50     | \$ 6,800.00   | \$ 350,000.00   | \$ 340,000.00   | 97.10%      | 232 |
| MONTAGUE | SUNSET      | 25.35  | \$ 15,385.00  | \$ 412,000.00   | \$ 390,000.00   | 94.70%      | 9   |
| MONTAGUE | SUNSET      | 78.75  | \$ 8,937.00   | \$ 728,000.00   | \$ 703,822.00   | 96.70%      | 245 |
| MONTAGUE | SAINT JO    | 54     | \$ 13,171.00  | \$ 725,000.00   | \$ 711,230.00   | 98.10%      | 235 |
| MONTAGUE | SUNSET      | 61.84  | \$ 12,115.00  | \$ 798,900.00   | \$ 749,200.00   | 93.80%      | 386 |
| MONTAGUE | BOWIE       | 12.5   | \$ 16,000.00  | \$ 218,750.00   | \$ 200,000.00   | 91.40%      | 802 |
| AVG      |             | 32.01  | \$ 11,810.00  | \$ 368,878.00   | \$ 353,120.00   | 95.30%      | 239 |
| COUNTY   | AREA        | ACRES  | \$ ACRE       | LIST \$         | SOLD \$         | SALE / LIST | DOM |
| WISE     | BRIDGEPORT  | 16.02  | \$ 12,046.00  | \$ 219,900.00   | \$ 193,000.00   | 87.80%      | 136 |
| WISE     | DECATUR     | 10.62  | \$ 19,774.00  | \$ 223,000.00   | \$ 210,000.00   | 94.20%      | 192 |
| WISE     | BRIDGEPORT  | 11.17  | \$ 22,381.00  | \$ 249,999.00   | \$ 249,999.00   | 100.00%     | 5   |
| WISE     | DECATUR     | 10.15  | \$ 27,871.00  | \$ 283,000.00   | \$ 283,000.00   | 100.00%     | 51  |
| WISE     | BOYD        | 10.01  | \$ 29,970.00  | \$ 300,000.00   | \$ 300,000.00   | 100.00%     | 24  |
| WISE     | SPRINGTOWN  | 30.55  | \$ 13,093.00  | \$ 485,000.00   | \$ 400,000.00   | 82.50%      | 237 |
| WISE     | BRIDGEPORT  | 20.02  | \$ 20,480.00  | \$ 490,490.00   | \$ 410,000.00   | 83.60%      | 43  |
| WISE     | DECATUR     | 13.01  | \$ 37,282.00  | \$ 494,000.00   | \$ 485,000.00   | 98.20%      | 8   |
| WISE     | ALVORD      | 115.18 | \$ 13,772.00  | \$ 1,612,520.00 | \$ 1,586,270.00 | 98.40%      | 1   |
| WISE     | CHICO       | 225    | \$ 12,009.00  | \$ 3,375,000.00 | \$ 2,701,923.00 | 80.10%      | 175 |
| WISE     | DECATUR     | 138.48 | \$ 50,549.00  | \$ 5,539,200.00 | \$ 7,000,000.00 | 126.40%     | 1   |
| AVG      |             | 54.57  | \$ 23,566.00  | \$ 1,206,555.00 | \$ 1,256,290.00 | 95.50%      | 43  |



# Animal Disease Traceability

By Barry Whitworth, DVM

On July 6, 2020, the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) posted in the Federal Register a proposal that radio frequency identification tags be used as official identification for cattle and bison. Following a period for public comment, the USDA APHIS released a statement on April 24, 2024, with the amended animal disease traceability (ADT) regulation for cattle and bison. The full press release may be found at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/news/agency-announcements/aphis-bolsters-animal-disease-traceability-united-states>. Under the new rule, cattle and bison will need to be identified with tags that are both visual and electronic.

The USDA defines ADT as knowing where diseased and at-risk animals are, where they have been, and when the animal disease event took place. A system that allows for efficient traceability of livestock in the United States is essential for animal health and reducing the economic effect of a foreign animal disease outbreak and other diseases on livestock producers as well as others whose well-being depends on livestock production.

In the past, the USDA used metal tags commonly referred to as “Brite” or “Silver” tags to officially identify cattle and bison. Also, cattle and bison vaccinated for brucellosis were tagged with an orange USDA metal tag. Recently, the USDA recognized electronic identification (EID) as an official ID. Under the new rule, cattle and bison needing an USDA official ID will be tagged with an EID.

According to Dr. Rod Hall, State Veterinarian of Oklahoma, the average cattle producer will not notice any change under the new rule and will not have to do



The classes of cattle and bison requiring USDA official ID have not changed. (Courtesy photo)

anything differently than they are currently doing. The rule does not require mandatory tagging of cattle on a farm or ranch. Livestock auctions will continue to tag cattle that require an official USDA ID. The only change is that an EID will be used instead of a metal tag. The classes of cattle and bison requiring USDA official ID have not changed. The classes are:

## **Beef Cattle & Bison**

- Sexually intact 18 months and older
- Used for rodeo or recreational events (regardless of age)
- Used for shows or exhibitions

## **Dairy Cattle**

- All female dairy cattle
- All male dairy cattle born after March 11, 2013

Other common reasons that cattle and bison require USDA official ID include disease testing for brucellosis or tuberculosis and movement from one state to another state. Also, brucellosis or calfhood vaccination of heifers require official ID. The official USDA ID will be an EID starting November 2024.

If a cattle producer would like to tag their breeding cattle, electronic ID tags are available from Dr. Rod Hall. Producers will have to pay the shipping cost but the tags are free. The order form is available at: <https://ag.ok.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/MULTI-TAG-ORDER-FORM-v8.23.pdf>. Producers with questions should call Oklahoma Department of

Agriculture, Food & Forestry at 405-522-6141.

Change is usually hard. Changing how cattle and bison are officially identified will be difficult for some cattle producers. However, in the event of a disease outbreak, the use of EID should make the traceability process more efficient which is a good thing.

Producer wanting more information on the USDA amended rule on animal disease traceability should go to: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/traceability#:~:text=A%20comprehensive%20animal%20disease%20traceability%20system%20is%20our,sick%20and%20exposed%20animals%20to%20stop%20disease%20spread.>



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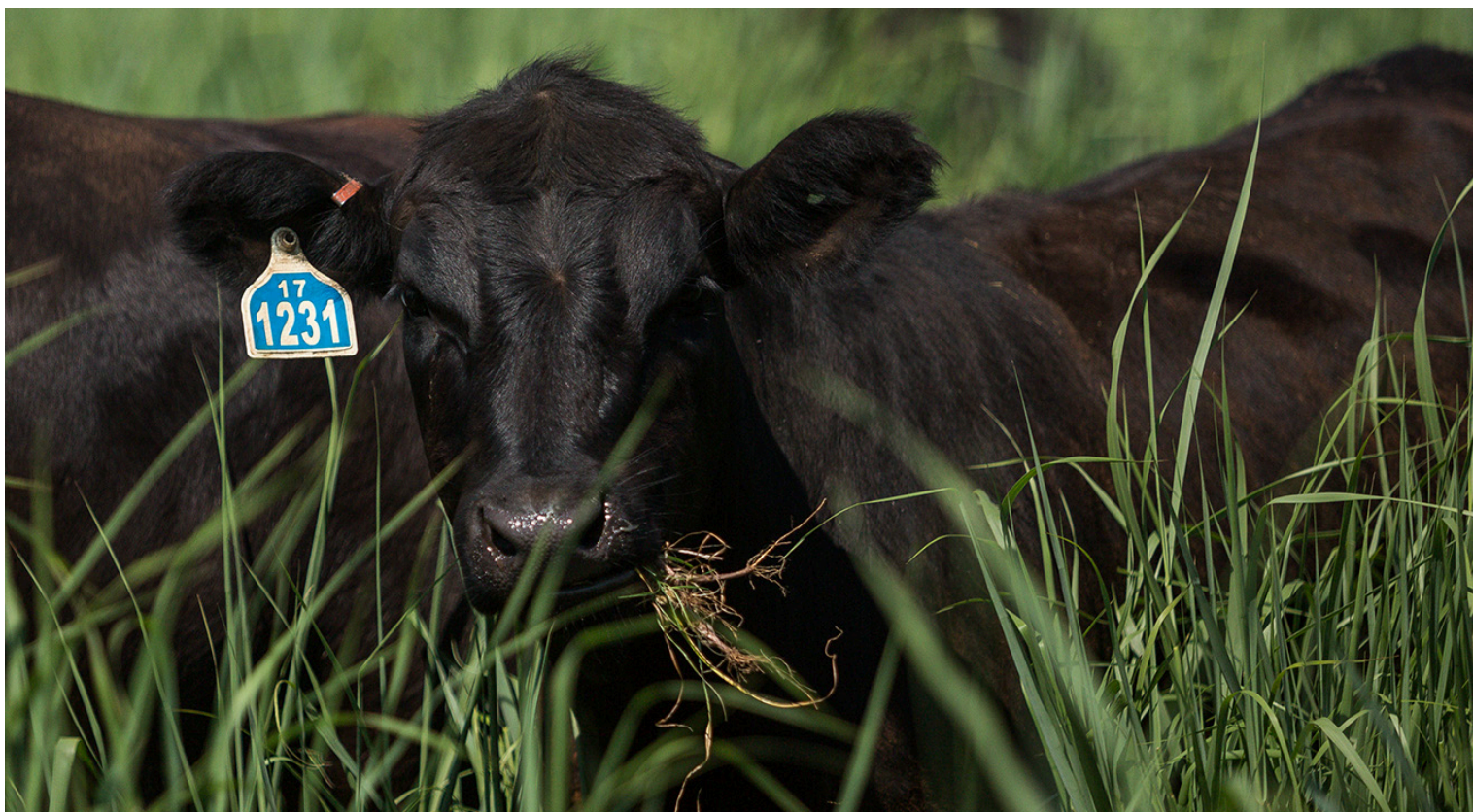


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# *Noble Learning:*

## Adapting Forage Supply and Stocking Rates Ahead of a La Niña: Strategies for Resilient

By Maddy Bezner

By the midpoint of the growing season, ranchers typically should have accumulated more than half of the necessary forage their livestock will need for the year and the remainder of the dormant season. However, during La Niña years, such as 2024 is predicted to be, forage production can fall short in the next six months if and when weather patterns shift toward drier and warmer conditions in many states.

Understanding and adapting to these changes is not just beneficial for ranchers – it's essential for

sustainable operations.

### **Understanding the Impact of La Niña on Your Region**

La Niña conditions can drastically alter precipitation levels and temperature patterns, depending on the region.

Across the Southern United States, La Niña events tend to bring dry conditions that can lead to decreased forage growth, which challenges ranchers who depend on grazing native pastures year-round. Hugh Aljoe, director of ranches, outreach and partnerships at Noble Research Institute,

says the key to proactive forage management is first understanding how a La Niña year may impact your area and your ranch.

“Understanding the specific impact of La Niña on your region’s climate – particularly how it influences drought conditions – is crucial,” he says. “It allows us to make informed decisions about adjusting our forage supply strategy.”

Clearly, drought will stress existing vegetation and reduce the soil’s moisture retention capacity, making the use of effective graz-

ing management and adequate recovery times critical in regions that go dry. Producers in other parts of the country may see an overabundance of rain and colder winter conditions thanks to La Niña, and have to deal with the challenges those can bring.

### **Effective Forage and Stocking Management**

With a clear understanding of how a La Niña year impacts your region, you can make strategic adjustments in time to mitigate risks, Aljoe says. If drought is likely, be

**Continued on page 23**



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**Continued from page 20**

ready to consider adjusting your stocking rate to align with reduced forage availability as a direct approach to managing through a La Niña year.

“When we look at forage and grazing management, it’s crucial that these align with our soil health principles. We must ensure that we can always adjust our stocking rate according to the carrying capacity, which varies depending on the land’s ability to support forage production.”

Aljoe explains that if ranchers see that they are falling behind on their forage curve and rainfall patterns are not meeting their needs for the year, then proactive measures, such as stocking adjustments, become essential to maintain the health of their pastures and the productivity of their cattle herd.

“If you wait until June 30 to identify that your production is lacking, you’re probably already behind,” Aljoe says, emphasizing that by June 1, ranchers should have already produced 30 percent of their annual forage, aiming to reach more than 60 percent by the end of the month.

**Reserve Herd Days**

“I prefer a simple method to assess forage production, which I call ‘reserve herd days.’ This gives us a clear estimate of how many days the cattle can graze a pasture without additional growth,” he says.

Reserve herd days are the number of days your existing total number of cattle (herd) can graze on existing forage reserves, including standing pasture and stored forage such as hay – total grazeable forage for the existing herd of cattle on date of assessment – assuming no additional growth (no consideration for regrowth potential) and leaving the residual required to sustain the plants and soil organisms.

This approach can help ranchers understand their buffer against forage scarcity and plan accord-

ingly. Aljoe recommends that by June 1, ranchers have grown enough forage to have more than 125 reserve herd days in front of them, and, by the end of June, at least 250.

“By the end of May, I examine my reserve herd days. If they are significantly below what’s needed – say 30 percent to 50 percent less – it’s a clear indication that I need to pay close attention, especially if the rainfall over winter was insufficient to recharge the soil moisture.”

**Decision Points for Stocking Adjustments**

Strategic destocking becomes a necessary consideration when reserve herd days indicate impending forage shortages.

“When forage is limited, it’s wise to start making destocking decisions, considering that there’s likely a lower-performing 20 percent of your herd that could be reduced,” he says.

Identifying less productive or older animals for early sale can prevent overgrazing, extend the existing grazing resources, and preserve the soil and plant health of your pastures.

Aljoe recommends maintaining a base stocking rate at 80 percent of the total capacity in southern Oklahoma and northeastern Texas. (That number decreases to 50 to 60 percent as one moves west or into south Texas.) This conservative approach ensures that ranchers are not overstocked more than once every five to seven years, thus preserving forage in good years to take advantage of potential market opportunities or to increase herd nutrition. Ultimately, the decision to destock is a balancing act between immediate economic pressures and the ranch’s long-term grazing land soil health and ecological sustainability.

By monitoring reserve herd days and being ready to take proactive measures like destocking, ranchers can navigate potential challenges posed by La Niña.

**Continued on page 27**



La Niña conditions can drastically alter precipitation levels and temperature patterns, depending on the region.



With a clear understanding of how a La Niña year impacts your region, you can make strategic adjustments in time to mitigate risks. (Photos courtesy Noble Research Institute)





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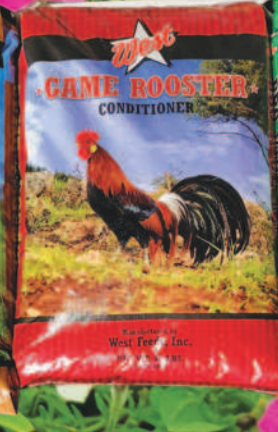
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**Continued from page 23****Filling Forage Gaps**

In cases where forage is lacking as early as June, Aljoe suggests strategic measures to bridge the gap. If early summer rainfall permits, this might include planting short-cycle forage crops like sudangrass, sorghum-sudan hybrids or millets in a mixed covercrop blend on grazeable cropland acres. Depending on the timing of the planting and subsequent rain, these crops can provide critical grazing relief in late summer or early fall.

“When we anticipate shortfalls, planting tactical forage crops early in the season can capitalize on the available moisture, providing a vital stopgap and securing early fall grazing opportunities,” he says.

“In situations where forage supply might not meet demand, particularly during a La Niña year, it’s important to implement strategies that extend the life and productivity of our pastures,” he adds. By controlling or limiting grazing time, allowing cattle into just the portion of the pasture they need for the day and then moving them, you significantly reduce trampling and enhance regrowth. This method not only extends the usability of the pastures, but also maximizes their regenerative capacity.

**Forging Resilience  
During La Niña**

Navigating the challenges of a La Niña year requires a blend of timely action, strategic foresight, and effective use of available resources. By understanding the potential impacts of La Niña on their specific regions, employing predictive tools such as calculating reserve herd days, and adapting grazing and stocking practices accordingly, ranchers can maintain the health of their pastures and the productivity of their herds. Through proactive management, the adversity posed by a La Niña year can be transformed into an opportunity to strengthen the resilience of ranch operations. 



(Above) In cases where forage is lacking as early as June, Aljoe suggests strategic measures to bridge the gap. (Left) Navigating the challenges of a La Niña year requires a blend of timely action, strategic foresight, and effective use of available resources. (Photos courtesy Noble Research Institute)





# Beat the Heat: Effective Strategies for Managing

By Savannah Magoteaux



High temperatures can pose various risks to equine health, including dehydration, heat stress, and heat-related illnesses. (Courtesy photos)

Horses are particularly vulnerable to the heat as the summer sun starts beating down. High temperatures can pose various risks to equine health, including dehydration, heat stress, and heat-related illnesses.

Proper management is essential to ensure the well-being of our equine companions during the sweltering summer months. We have gathered some effective strategies for helping horses cope

with summertime heat.

As always, please contact your veterinarian for further information.

## **Understanding Equine Thermoregulation**

Like humans, horses rely on thermoregulation mechanisms to maintain a stable body temperature. However, due to their large size and heavy coat, horses are more susceptible to heat stress. Horses primarily dissipate heat

through sweating, respiration, and behavioral adaptations such as seeking shade and water sources.

## **Hydration is Key**

Hydration is crucial for horses to regulate their body temperature and prevent dehydration. Provide access to clean, fresh water at all times, and consider adding electrolytes to their diet to replace lost minerals through sweating. Research by the University of

Minnesota Extension suggests that horses may need up to two gallons of water per 100 pounds of body weight daily during hot weather.

## **Shade and Shelter**

Offer ample shade and shelter options to horses to escape the direct heat of the sun. Shade structures, natural tree cover, and well-ventilated shelters can provide relief from the scorching rays and help horses regulate their body temperature.





According to a study published in the *Journal of Thermal Biology*, access to shade can significantly reduce heat stress in horses and improve their overall well-being.

### Proper Ventilation and Airflow

Ensure adequate ventilation in stables and barns to promote airflow and reduce heat buildup. Installing fans or opening windows and doors can improve air circulation and create a more comfortable environment for horses. Research conducted by the University of Florida indicates that proper ventilation is essential for minimizing heat stress and respiratory issues in stabled horses during hot weather.

### Adjust Feeding and Nutrition

Modify feeding routines and dietary practices to accommodate horses' increased energy requirements and prevent digestive issues in hot weather. Offer smaller, more frequent meals to encourage consistent nutrient intake without overloading the digestive system. Additionally, choose feeds with lower protein and higher fiber content, as excessive protein metabolism can generate additional heat in the body.

### Implement Cooling Techniques

Utilize various cooling methods to help horses dissipate excess heat and lower their body temperature. Wetting the horse's body with water or using fans to create evaporative cooling can be effective strategies. However, it's essential to monitor the horse's response to cooling techniques to prevent chilling or exacerbating respiratory issues.

Summertime heat poses significant challenges for horses and requires proactive management to ensure their well-being.

By understanding and implementing effective strategies such as hydration, shade provision, proper ventilation, adjusted feeding practices, and cooling techniques, horse owners can help their equine companions stay



cool and comfortable during hot weather. Remember, vigilant observation and responsive action are key to preventing heat-related illnesses and promoting optimal health in horses throughout the summer months.

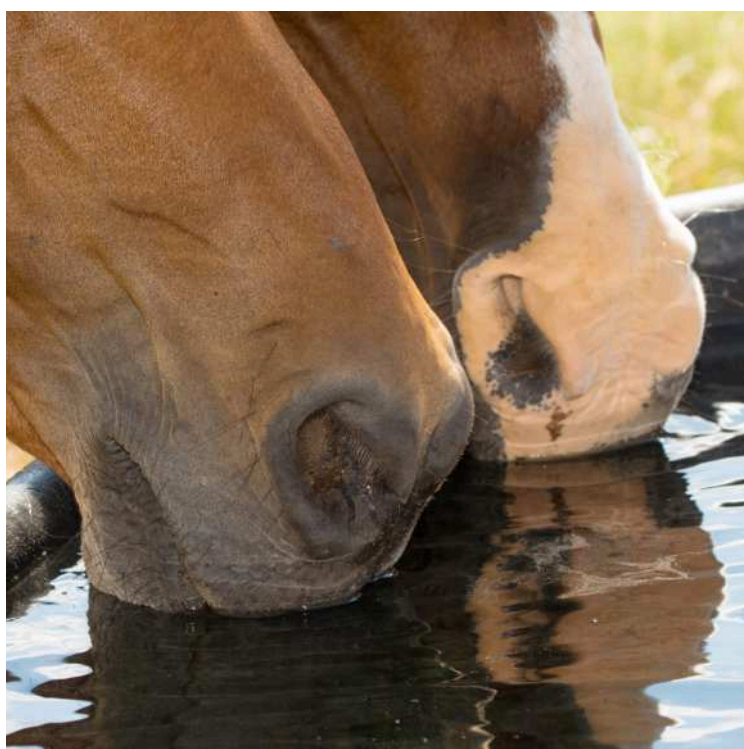
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Top: Shade and shelter options allow horses to escape the direct heat of the sun.

Bottom: Hydration is crucial for horses to regulate body temperature.






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# A Memorial Roping

By Krista Lucas Wynn

The annual Windy Ryon roping was held on Memorial weekend, May 24-26, 2024. The bucket list event, in Saginaw, Texas, featured exciting competition in team roping, breakaway roping, tie down roping, steer roping, and team tying. Miraculously, the weather did not play much of a factor in the arena conditions, and it was a fun time had by all.

The three days of competition was the 50th year for the Windy Ryon, named after the cowboy businessman who founded Ryon's Saddle Shop and Western Store, located in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards. The arena is conveniently just 10 minutes from the Stockyards, giving fans a full day of western activities. The weekend kicked off Friday, May 24, with an open breakaway roping, women's team roping and open team roping.

The ladies breakaway competition featured the sport's top breakaway ropers in the industry, competing for cash, prizes and the title of Windy Ryon breakaway roping champion. Tiada Gray won the average in the ladies breakaway roping and took home \$8,722, a buckle and other prizes from event sponsors. Previously NTFR featured roper, Cheyenne McCartney, won the second round and finished third in the average.

Beverly Robbins and Kaitlyn Torres took home the average win in the ladies team roping, and Torres also finished second in the average heeling for Lari Dee Guy. Luke Brown and Travis Graves won the open team roping.

Saturday, in the invitational tie down roping, Cash Enderli walked away with the average win and \$8,000. Enderli placed fourth in the first and second rounds to help him secure the prestigious win. Chris McCuiston, Cash Hooper and Lane Webb finished second



The three days of competition was the 50th year for the Windy Ryon, named after the cowboy businessman who founded Ryon's Saddle Shop and Western Store, located in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards. (Photo courtesy Krista Lucas Wynn)

through fourth in the average.


The match roping featured 2024 Rodeo Houston champion Ty Harris and 2023 world champion Riley Webb. The young superstars matched last year at the Windy Ryon where Webb edged out Harris. Webb repeated his winning ways by beating Harris again, winning a check worth \$5,000.

Colt Carter also repeated his winning ways in the double mugging. In 2023, Carter won the event with Cinch Moody. This

year, Carter and Desmon Johnson finished first, with Brand Cude and Cody Jordan second, and Crockett Carothers and Cash Lockhead third.

The competition continued into Sunday, with the number 11.5 team roping and steer roping. Kenny Kuykendall and Beau Patterson were the 11.5 champions and won \$11,768. The steer roping consisted of three rounds and a short go. Clay Long stayed consistent all day and won the

title along with a \$6,558 check. Tuf Hardman, Scott Snedecor and Matt Davis rounded out the top four in the average.

The Windy Ryon roping continues to be on the calendar for ropers of all levels, even after 50 years. Throughout the years, the event has raised scholarship money for young men and women, and thanks to the brave men and women who fight for our country, can continue to be a staple in North Texas for the next 50 years. 



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**254.20 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY**



**ALEXANDER RANCH**

**\$4,200/Ac**

Nice all around property located 15 minutes from Wichita Falls. Ideal for running cattle, hunting, or building a home. Moderate mesquite coverage, above average grasses, rolling topography with tremendous views, 2 seasonal creeks, 3 stock ponds, completely fenced and cross fenced, livestock pens, electricity available, water available. Light oil production isolated to the southeast corner, minerals are negotiable with an acceptable contract.

**119.39 ACRES | CLAY COUNTY**



**BRIXEY RANCH**

**\$4,900/Ac**

Located southwest corner of Brixey and Whitaker Rd. 2,820' frontage on Brixey Rd, 1,600' Whitaker Rd. This would be a great tract to subdivide. Open pasture with scattered mesquites, rolling topo, impressive views, one stock pond, livestock barn, corrals, electricity is available, one water well. There are two pumpjacks on the property, but do not appear to be active. The seller may consider sub-dividing on a case by case basis, owner finance available. Contact Listing Agent Jon Moss – 940-867-6743.

**300.14 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY**



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The Edsel Farm is located less than a half mile north of US HWY 287. Excellent access with frontage on Huntington, Kiel and Wellington Lane. The land consists of 300.139 total acres, 165 acres is tillable farmland, balance being moderate to heavily wooded native pasture. There are partial cross fences, boundary is fenced in average condition. Surface water consist of three ponds, seasonal creek and East Fork Pond Creek, partial floodplain. Electricity and water appear available along Huntington and Kiel.

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# NAILING SUCCESS

Inside the Life of Trainer Josh,  
Farrier Brittani Halsell

“No hoof, no horse,” is how the saying goes. It might sound simple, but it sums up the importance a horse’s feet play in overall well-being, and it is the farrier that has been providing this crucial aspect of horse health management for almost as long as man has been riding.

Brittani Halsell has spent years mastering the craft and has built a business working with high-performance horses. Her goal is to provide each animal athlete with a solid, balanced base, to remain healthy and reach their fullest potential.

**Continued on page 37**



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### Continued from page 35

“My favorite thing about shoeing horses is being able to problem solve on high-performing horses when something isn’t exactly right,” Halsell said. “This isn’t a science; it’s an art. I like being creative and being a voice for these athletes. I like when the trainer, the vet, and I can all work together to get everything operating at 110 percent and hopefully, winning.”

### Suburban Start

Halsell’s journey began not in the country, but in a suburb of Detroit, Mich., into a family who was not involved in agriculture. Instead, Halsell was introduced to horses by a neighbor when the family moved to a more rural area when she was just nine years old.

“She raised, trained and showed hunter/jumpers and I did chores in exchange for lessons,” Halsell recalled. “During this time, I became heavily involved in 4-H and FFA, where I fell in love with cattle and specifically, dairy farming.”

Halsell went to work for a custom processing facility in high school, where they slaughtered and processed beef, lamb, hogs, and deer during hunting season. After graduating, she attended Michigan State University.

“I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to accomplish with that,” Halsell admitted. “I figured I could get an apprenticeship on a ranch or feed yard, and let my options grow from there. I ended up working for the AQHA’s second leading breeder of barrel horses in Oklahoma during breeding season the following year, and that’s when I decided I would move south.”

Halsell said necessity led her to Oklahoma State Horseshoeing School in 2011, but little did she know, she was beginning a journey that would guide her to her future career.

“I like to collect knowledge and I thoroughly believed I was just learning a skill that would benefit myself and my horses. I was right, but it ended up being so much

**Continued on page 38**



Brittani Halsell says her favorite part of shoeing horses is being able to problem solve on high-performance horses when something isn’t exactly right. (Photo courtesy Jo Haigwood)



Brittani Halsell with the horse she has had since the age of 16. (Photo by Dani Blackburn)





The Halsells plan to continue shoeing and training horses, as well as compete on a couple of horses they have raised. Follow along their journey at Halsell Equine on Facebook. (Left photo courtesy Cordelle Keller, right photo courtesy Jo Haigwood)

### Continued from page 37

more than that,” Halsell said.

However, that does not mean it was easy. She found herself as the only female student in a class of 13, and the work was challenging.

“It was very physically demanding even though I was young and in great shape. I couldn’t fathom quitting. I would have been embarrassed being the only girl who couldn’t handle it, so I stuck it out and was offered an apprenticeship in Texas on the day of graduation,” Halsell said.

Halsell graduated on a Friday, drove back to Michigan that night, packed everything she owned and

was in Seymour, Texas, before the weekend was done.

She also spent time in West Texas working with ranch horses and found a mentor in Bruce Gibbs.

“That will always be something I look back on fondly. Bruce Gibbs took me on like one of his own, showed me the ropes, and inserted me into every new account that I took on.

“If it wasn’t for his confidence in me, this little, blonde-haired Yankee would’ve fallen flat on her face out there. He instilled in me the ability to take on a challenge even though I didn’t quite

fit in yet. It was easily the largest moment of growth in my career,” Halsell said.

The farrier is now certified through the American Farrier’s Association.

After moving to Montague County, she established a new friendship and mentorship opportunity with Travis Day, who brought Halsell into the sport horse world and changed her career. Now, she shoes almost exclusively hunter jumpers.

“I think every day about how the path from ranch horses in rural Texas to the best hunters and grand prix jumpers in the nation living

around the DFW area is quite a leap. There have been many tiny successes and a lot of people who believe in me, sometimes more than I believe in myself, and that is what has led me here,” Halsell said.

### Day-to-Day

Halsell calls her day simple, with 20 to 70 horses in most of her barns.

She sets up at one place and gets to work each morning. A computer program helps keep everyone on schedule, does billing for her so she can bring her list of horses due that day, and then shares it with the assistants



or owners.

“Some days are really long and tedious, but on a perfect day, I am done around 2 p.m. so I can get home and help my husband finish riding his training horses and ride my horses. I love slow evenings doing our chores and enjoying my animals,” Halsell said.

Josh and Brittani were recently wed in April 2024 and now own and operate Halsell Equine. Josh was born on his family’s ranch in Crowell, Texas, and attended West Texas A&M before immediately going to work.

He spent time as a bunkhouse cowboy at the Pitchfork Ranch, managed the High Card Ranch for 13 years, and went on to be the Tongue River Ranch’s North Camp cowboy for almost eight years until the pair were wed.

Josh trained, competed on, and sold ranch horses with great success while he lived on and worked for the ranches, with many show and team roping wins as well as top sellers. He is now independent and has goals of training client horses to compete locally or be utilized as ranch horses.

The Halsells also have plans to build a home, update the blacksmithing shop to make it more efficient for clients that haul to their barn and hope to train and compete on a couple of the horses they have raised and purchased with a little success there, too.

“My goals and plans don’t involve my business at this point. I am really happy with where I am with my clientele and my location. I will, as always, continue to pursue educational opportunities and build my skills and knowledge, but I want to continue on the path I have chosen.

“When the horses in my care are sound and winning, that is the biggest thrill for me. I love to know I had a hand in a big championship or even just the progress of a young hopeful.”

Follow along Halsell’s journey by following Halsell Equine on Facebook.



(Above) Brittani Halsell graduated from Oklahoma State Horseshoeing School in 2011, and has built a business working on hunter jumpers. Photo courtesy Jo Haigwood. (Left) Josh Halsell worked on the Pitchfork Ranch, High Card Ranch, and Tongue River Ranch’s North Camp before founding Halsell Equine. Photo courtesy Rachel Sebastian.





# Lacey's Pantry

## Lemon Lover's Trifle

By Lacey Vilhauer



**Total Time: 4.5 Hours | Serves 12**

**Ingredients:**

- 1 Lemon Lovers Pound Cake cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 2.7 oz box Dream Whip
- 3 cup very cold whole milk divided
- 2 3.4 oz boxes instant lemon pudding mix
- 16 oz frozen whipped topping OR 4 cups fresh sweetened whipped cream
- 2 Tbsp grated white chocolate
- Lemon slices and sprigs of fresh mint for garnishing

**Directions:**

1. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat the granulated sugar and lemon juice together. Stir until the sugar is completely dissolved then set aside to cool.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer whip together the Dream Whip (the box contains 2 envelopes - use both) and 2 cups of cold whole milk. Whip for 5 minutes or until soft peaks form.
3. Add both packages of lemon pudding and the remaining 1 cup of whole milk. Whip for 2 to 3 minutes until thickened.
4. To assemble, divide the cubed cake in half. Begin with a layer of cubed cake on the bottom of the trifle bowl. Brush with 1/2 of the lemon syrup. Add a layer of lemon cream and 1/2 of the whipped topping. Repeat with cake, brush with lemon syrup, lemon cream ending with whipped topping.
5. Sprinkle the top with grated white chocolate and garnish with lemon slice and fresh mint if desired.
6. Chill thoroughly for at least 4 hours prior to serving. ®



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# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

## A Decade of Many Changes

**M**y country boy and I are in our fifth decade together, and that sounds like forever when I write it. I am thankful for our many years together, but these days I wish I could shake the feeling of time as fleeting. I am doing my best, however, to accept the progression of time as part of the miracle of life and focus on living each and every moment to its fullest potential.

Our past decade has been one of many changes, but maybe all decades are like that. Some changes we want, some we do not. Some we create ourselves, some when we have no choice other than to accept them as part of life.

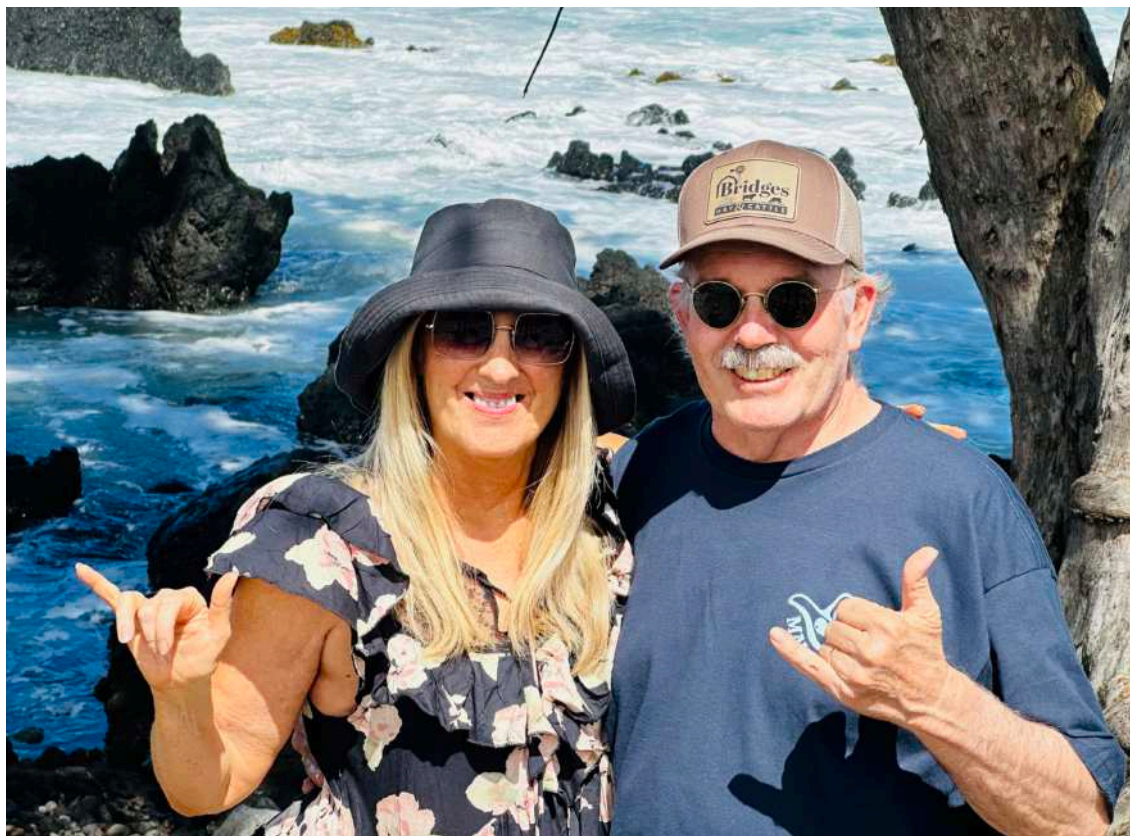
I admit I have not been super happy with myself in recent years. I am carrying the extra pounds I promised myself I would not gain back. I still struggle with sadness and regret so deep that at times takes my breath away.

With the beginning of another new year, I feel happier, dare I say lighter, than I have in years. I am discovering a new me, or maybe it is the me that always has been that I just have not given a chance to be.

I see her now. The girl that loves all things simple and care-free. The girl that only wants to have fun and laugh a lot. The girl that can be happy wherever she is, as long as it is with her country boy.

I anticipate many more changes in this next decade. No doubt there could be some I do not want or like, but I envision many that I intend to make myself.

In fact, I have already begun



The past decade has been one of many changes for Annette Bridges and her husband. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

making some changes. Hopefully my better food choices and exercise routines will result in a smaller and stronger me. I certainly intend to make my new lifestyle improvements permanent.

As we move forward into what some describe as the Autumn season of our lives, my husband and I are becoming more and more focused on what matters most to us.


Actually, I had thought when I turned 65, I was entering the winter season of my life. It turns out I was 20 years too soon to think so.

In fact, age 65 actually marks the official beginning of the Autumn season of life, and I love Autumn. The cooler temperatures are always a welcome relief from the hot Texas summers. My husband and I both relish in the beautiful leaf colors, and we look forward to road trips to appreciate the beauty.

Autumn leaves of red, orange and yellow are stunning as they blanket their surroundings with the promise that winter is not yet here. We intend to do everything we can to embrace and enjoy this

lovely season of our lives.

One ranch revision on our horizon will no doubt include some herd downsizing and likely the hiring of more help if we are to continue keeping some sweet bovines around here. Asking for help is a change that is difficult for my country boy, but I think he is realizing getting help can delay some changes he does not yet want to make.

Sometimes you simply have to do what you have to in order to do what you want to do. 





# JESSE'S JEWELZ

By Jesse Kader

Summer time is here and though it may be hot, we can still get a Western summer style without lots of layers. These striped shorts are so cute and comfy and actually also have a matching shirt that pair up to make a cute set. You also can wear it with basic blouses as shown here and throw on your favorite turquoise. There are so many options to mix and match. See all of this and more at [www.jessesjewelz.com](http://www.jessesjewelz.com). 



# Lessons from a Pit Bull

By Dal Houston

I have always liked dogs. Well, to say I have always really loved dogs would be more truthful - especially mutts or dogs from the pound. Until recent years, the only dogs I really did not like were pit bulls. It seemed like every other day there would be a news story about a pit bull mauling some child or elderly person, and in some cases, killing them. After hearing these stories, I often wondered why someone would want such a dangerous dog. I even remember hearing about some wanting to ban pit bulls from their communities, and at one time, I thought that may not be a bad idea.

I do not think I had ever had an encounter with a pit bull, nor did I know anyone who did, that caused this negative opinion, rather it was what I heard about the breed from others that turned me against them. Then, about eight years ago, while looking for cattle along the river, a pit bull pup, likely having been dumped, came out of the brush. Had it been a dog of any other breed, I would have had no qualms about approaching it, but I saw that thick, wide head, and all I could think was that I had better be careful because it was probably a dangerous dog. The pup was scared and standoffish, but after a while, we finally approached each other. This was the beginning of a wonderful relationship, and, as I have recently learned, a dramatic eye-opening life lesson.

Pete, as my son named the pup, was not anything like the things I had heard about pit bulls. Instead, he was without a doubt the most loyal, caring and loving dog I ever had. Unfortunately, the only bad habit Pete had was chasing cars, and after a couple of years, he was gone. I can tell you with certainty that I would have never picked a pit bull as a pet; it was only this chance meeting that brought us together.

After a few years without Pete, a suggested social media post came up on my wife's phone, showing that the city pound had a young pit bull they were looking to place. After being convinced by my wife, I went to check him out, and Lucky became part of my life. Pete was the only dog I had ever known that was as loyal and caring as Lucky, and while they had different personalities, there is no way I can rank one over the other.

Recently, I lost Lucky. It turns out he had the same bad habit of chasing cars. Oddly, within an hour of this loss, another suggested post on social media appeared, this time from a vet



For years Dal Houston had nothing but scorn for pit bulls and their owners, based solely on what someone else was saying about them. He had no experience or background on the matter, and he had only relied on what he was being told. But after finding a pit bull by chance and adopting two more, he realized he was wrong. Perhaps there is a new family member for you at a local animal shelter who might change your perspective on the world. (Courtesy photo)

clinic looking to place a pit bull. It is with this that Winifred has now become part of our family. Again, such an incredibly wonderful dog. All three of our pit bulls have had absolutely nothing in common with the bad reputation associated with their breed.


Now, here is the lesson - and it is not that Pit bulls are good dogs (although they are). For years I had nothing but scorn for pit bulls and their owners, based solely on what someone else was saying about them. I had no experience or background on the matter, and I had only relied on what I was being told.

Now I am not comparing dogs to humans, or humans to dogs, but I recently realized that in the past there have been many groups of people that I had formed negative opinions about, when in fact I had never had any encounters with any people from these groups. When I did, I found them to be nothing like the negative opinions I had formed about them.

It seems that today's society is helplessly

divided - whether by politics, religion, race, ethnicity, or economics, you name it and there is a division.

I realize often we are developing our sense of loathing, and in some cases, outright hatred against someone different, not as a result of an interaction or any firsthand experience, but based on what someone else is telling us. It only takes turning on the television or scanning the internet to be bombarded with countless stories or commentary encouraging us to blame, dislike or even exhibit violence against those different from ourselves. No one is completely immune to such influence.

In listening to these stories, and thinking about others I know, and the negative opinions they may hold regarding others, I realize they are often like me regarding my opinion of pit bulls, in that they formed their opinions not on any real interaction with someone instead solely based their opinion on what someone had said about a group. 



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# Old Man in the Mirror

By Bryce Angell

He kicked the goose down blanket to the cold and wood planked floor.  
 You could see his breath as he was headed for the bathroom door.  
 He tiptoed down the hall. His feet were bare, in need of socks. And wished that he'd at least  
 tried on his Christmas present Crocks.  
 His gout caused him to stumble, bumped a cracked and aging mirror. The cowboy's true  
 reflection forced an old man to appear.  
 The cowboy hesitated. Both hands were aged and shook. But he stretched and straightened  
 out the mirror. This time he dared a look.  
 His face was worn and wrinkled, gray hair knotted on his head. Eyebrows kinked and twisted  
 showed a hint of younger red.  
 The wrinkles in his face proved years of riding in the sun, and maybe too much bourbon from  
 his younger days of fun.  
 The cowboy quizzed the old man, "Are you sure you're really me?" The old goat in the mir-  
 ror replied, "You don't like what you see?"  
 "You've walked past me a thousand times and never shot a glance. Your gaze into the mirror  
 today is more than happenstance."  
 "It's been a few years since you've stood in front of this old mirror. And now you wear pot  
 belly shirts. You're drinking too much beer."  
 "So, please let me remind you how the two of us grew old. You chose the life of a cowboy,  
 but your life has been ten-fold."  
 "You raised three boys on this old ranch and showed them how to work. They learned by  
 pure example from a man who doesn't shirk."  
 "I know you're disappointed 'cuz they moved off from this land. But now they're raising  
 families. Hope you'll try to understand."  
 "No matter where your boys are, there's still a cowboy in their veins. They're far off in the  
 city, but their hands still hold the reins."  
 "So tell me why you're thinking that your life is all uphill. We still got all our teeth, and yes a  
 healthy dentist bill."  
 "A cowboy's life ain't easy. It's been tough on your old hide. But we've earned the brand as  
 cowboy. We can wear the name with pride."  
 "Count your blessings cowboy. There ain't many men like us. The reason why we've lived so  
 long, is we're one tough old cuss."  
 "So next time, when you're feeling like you're lower than a splat, just step up to your broken  
 mirror. We'll have a cowboy chat."



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**10:30** Shopping & HERD Cattle Drive  
**12pm** Mary Lee & Caesar's Cowboys at the Stockyards Second Rodeo  
**3pm** Landon Dodd - National Hall  
**5pm** Veteran's Day Honor Guard  
**5:30** Steve Markwardt & A-List Band  
**8:30** Jody Nix & the Texas Cowboys

**10am** BHWS Film Screening & Q&A  
**12pm** Bessie Smith Blues Tribute  
**1pm** The Western Flyers  
**3:30** Billy Mata's Texas Tradition  
**6:30** Bob Wills' Texas Playboys Special Guest Katie Shore  
**9:30** Junior Brown & Tanya Rae with the Brazos Valley Boys

The Great State of Texas is known for many things. Cattle drives, oil wells, barbecue and my personal favorite, music.

Texas fiddle music began in far west Texas to celebrate the cotton harvest but most of all, for dancing.

My friend, Mike Markwardt, is doing his part to ensure the next generation of Texans know and understand the importance of this

music, including how it influenced country and western music long before there was a place called Nashville and how Texas musicians of today are continuing this great legacy called Western swing.

Mark your calendars now and make plans to attend the Birthplace of Western Swing Music Festival coming this fall to Fort Worth. You'll be glad you did.

I'll see you there.

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# 10 Interesting Facts About Independence Day

By Dani Blackburn

Independence Day is celebrated this month as the nation commemorates the passage of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. The founding fathers declared the 13 colonies were no longer subject to the monarch of Britain but were now free, independent states.

Today, that independence is often celebrated with fireworks, picnics, parades, fairs, and a variety of other public and private events. As the nation prepares to once again honor its heritage, it is fun to review these interesting facts about Fourth of July.

- John Adams, Founding Father, argued the official holiday should be celebrated on July 2, not July 4.

His reasoning was due to the fact the Continental Congress voted on independence on July 2, 1776; however, they did not approve the document until July 4, 1776.

- There was an estimated 2.5 million people living in the 13 colonies on July 4, 1776.

- According to the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council, Americans will eat 150 million hot dogs, or enough to stretch from Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles more than five times. There are not any organizations that track how many hamburgers will be consumed.

However, it is estimated Americans eat roughly 140 million burgers per day, and that number is two-and-a-half times as many hotdogs.

Overall, that could mean that the burger tally for Independence Day is around 375 million.

- Americans take pride in their flag and it shows. It is estimated around 64 percent of the population owns an American flag, and 51 percent own some type of apparel showing patriotic imagery or symbols.

- The 50th star on the United States flag was added in 1960 for the state of Hawaii, but overall, there have been 27 different versions of the flag.

- Emergency rooms see an increase in the number of injuries on Independence Day, with fireworks injuries among the most common reason for visits.

According to the NPR, 10,200 people were injured by fireworks in 2022.

- Large Fourth of July events can be livestreamed from the comfort of your own home, including A Capitol Fourth from Wash-



There was an estimated 2.5 million people living in the 13 colonies on July 4, 1776. (Courtesy photo)

ington, D.C.

- The Declaration of Independence was written on a laptop, but obviously not a modern laptop. Thomas Jefferson is said to have drafted the document on a writing desk that could fit over one's lap, known at the time as a 'laptop.'

- Americans spend more than one billion dollars on a fireworks each year according to the American Pyrotechnics Association, with only 10 percent of those fireworks set off professionally, and the tradition of celebrating fireworks might just date back to 1777.

John Adams is said to have written in a letter to his wife that he wanted the day to be celebrated with pomp, parade, shows, and illuminations.


- The United States of America is not alone in celebrating independence.

Other countries also celebrate, including Norway, Denmark, Ireland, and Australia.

## References

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# Noble Learning:

## Set Up a Monitoring Site to Measure Regenerative Progress on Your Ranch

By Laura Nelson, Noble Research Institute

If you could increase the amount of productive land you operate by 30 percent, without an additional land payment or lease agreement, would you do so?

For most, the answer is a no-brainer.

Noble Research Institute Senior Regenerative Ranching Advisor Jim Johnson says it's not uncommon to have pasture with 30 percent bare ground, which means the increase in land capacity you seek may already be right under your nose.

"If you're able to work toward management principles that will help cover that 30 percent, you just earned 30 percent more acres to operate on for free," Johnson says. The problem is, "most people don't realize they're giving up that much production."

The best way to manage for more is to measure where you are now and where you want to go, he says.

The first step to achieving that objective may start with adding a simple, five-minute task to your spring to-do list: setting up monitoring sites or "transects" to establish a consistent location to observe and measure your land management progress.

A monitoring transect is a line between two marked points, along which you measure or take samples up and down the length of a tape measure stretched between the points.

Marking a single-point monitoring location will do, also.



The best way to manage for more is to measure where you are now and where you want to go

### Where and When to Monitor

Whether you set up a transect or stationary point, spring is an ideal time to establish the site, Johnson says.

The most important part is selecting the site itself. Ideally, the location will be representative of the ranch or the particular pasture.

That may require more than one location. If you have upland and bottom ground, or introduced and native forages, or different soil types – you may want to select monitoring locations that represent those differences.

Make sure the location you select is not impacted by gates, fence

lines, water tanks, livestock trails or other factors that would influence the area you're monitoring. Consider other non-management impacts on the location – does it intermittently flood or have a pipeline running nearby?

"The key is to find a location where your management is the





primary factor that has the ability to impact that land,” Johnson says.

Start by making some base observations and establish the frequency you’d like to monitor the location. Some want to record observations at the height of the cool growing season and the height of the warm growing season. Others may choose quarterly monitoring, with one for each season. Johnson says he’s satisfied with annual observations, “because a lot of these things we’re monitoring change very slowly.”

Set a reminder on your phone or note the monitoring dates on your calendar to keep you on track.

### What and How to Monitor

Decide how you want to mark your monitoring location. You may set a t-post, drop a GPS pin on your smartphone, or use a landmark as your reference point – say, start at the gate and step off 100 paces due north to arrive at your monitoring point.

Determine what you want to monitor at that location. The possibilities are endless, but Johnson suggests keeping it realistic and practical as to how much data you’ll collect and put to good use.

Measuring bare ground is an easy place to start, and it’s one pasture characteristic you might be able to make a measurable impact on within one growing season. A simple way to measure bare ground is the step method. Take 10 steps or 100 steps (these numbers make the math easy), and record if your foot is on covered soil or bare ground at each step. Then some simple math gives you the percentage of bare ground.

Other common measurements to make and record include:

- Plant species diversity
- Soil test results from soil samples
- Soil compaction or soil structure
- Soil color
- Animal diversity
- Root depth
- Brush encroachment.



Make sure the location you select is not impacted by gates, fence lines, water tanks, livestock trails or other factors that would influence the area you’re monitoring. Consider other non-management impacts on the location – does it intermittently flood or have a pipeline running nearby?



Whatever you choose to monitor, use the information you gather as a place to start asking yourself, “If my overall goal is to improve my resources, how can I follow the soil health principles to get there?” (Photos courtesy Noble Research Institute)

Several smartphone applications can help identify plants at your monitoring location or evaluate soil coverage, but even just a shovel to look at soil and root characteristics is a good place to start. For larger landscape monitoring, such as evaluating brush encroachment over time, consider standing at your monitoring point and taking a photo toward the ho-

rizon in each cardinal direction, or capture drone footage or satellite imagery from the same height and location time after time.

Next, determine your recording method. It may simply be a notebook where you record observations and insert any data from testing results. Some ranchers find recording data points or notations on a calendar or day

planner convenient, while more visual learners might choose to take photos on their cell phone and either file them into labeled folders or print the photos and insert them into the paper records.

### Using the Information You Gather

Whatever you choose to monitor, use the information you gather as a place to start asking yourself, “If my overall goal is to improve my resources, how can I follow the soil health principles to get there?”

Johnson says that’s one of the key questions he and other facilitators recommend that attendees at the Noble Land Essentials course ask themselves and apply to their management. Those who attend the course also gain access to Noble’s exclusive soil health progress tracker, an Excel spreadsheet designed to help organize monitoring data.

The measurements listed above may be observations otherwise easily overlooked in the course of the daily ranching rush and to-do list.

“The fact that we’re out there monitoring, observing, intentionally thinking about these things is so powerful,” Johnson says. “It doesn’t have to be an overly scientific process. Whatever you choose to do has to be simple and repeatable, something you’ll stick with and actually do.”

The monitoring data becomes part of your land management legacy, leaving a record from which future generations can learn. In a business where many factors are beyond your control, monitoring may add a much-needed sense of accomplishment as you branch out and try new management techniques, too.

“There is that little dopamine hit that comes with achieving a goal, having it in black and white, on paper, that says, ‘Here’s where we started, and here’s where we’ve gone, and I know for sure I’m making progress,’” Johnson says. “That encourages us to keep going.”



# The Garden Guy

By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker

## The Trumpet Call Has Sounded: It's Going to be a Supertunia Summer

As a national garden writer, I can tell the trumpet call has gone out for the long summer ahead.

This is a call for petunias, summer's favorite flowers, and they are trumpet shaped, of course.

This call is also one of panic as I hear it in the voices of gardeners saying, "I can't find my bubblegums."

This means they can't find their Supertunia Vista Bubblegum petunias. There is little doubt this is the most awarded petunia of all time. You can count them, 296 awards filling 10 pages. Bubblegums and all of the Supertunias, are among the most awarded flowers available to gardeners. By awards I'm referring to rigorous university trials in both the United States and Canada.

You want to get them planted now while the temperatures are mild over much of the country and acclimation is nice and easy. Even in the south it is a great time to plant before triple digit heat indexes are the norm.

Planting now will give you the longest time to enjoy a Supertunia Summer Celebration. You want to plant now because everyone is ready for season color and shopping at the local garden center is among the stiffest competition. Hence the panic over Bubblegums.

In recent years 'The Garden Guy' has put Supertunias through quite a trial. The trial wasn't really trying to prove anything but just satisfying a hunch after having watched Supertunias since my days as a horticulturist with Mississippi State University.

The Supertunia Vista Petunias are among the toughest petunias for the landscape and yet work beyond all expectations in containers and baskets too.

I wanted my test to begin here. So, I planted Supertunia Vistas Bubblegum, Paradise and Silverberry in October.



Those we call regular Supertunias are where the star, stripes, doubles and multicolored petunias are found. This planter box designed by James Winter features Supertunia Daybreak Charm and Royal Velvet petunias along with Bluebird nemesia.





I know this sounds more like Supertunia Fall versus a Supertunia Summer but hang with me.

Not only did they come right through fall and winter in the landscape but right into July when this part of the landscape turned into an unsuspected Yellowstone. I'm talking trophy-sized bucks. In zones 8 and warmer Supertunias can be planted in the fall with great success.

There are six Vistas to choose from including this year's Proven Winners 'Annual of the Year,' Supertunia Vista Jazzberry.

This year my Supertunia Summer kicked off in March with Supertunia Vista Paradise and Jazzberry coming through the winter in containers.

If you are ready to graduate from the Bubblegum School of Supertunias, then you might expand your repertoire by adding more Vistas. Did you know there are also Supertunia Mini Vistas?

There are 10 awarding colors from which to choose. Don't let the word mini cause you to think they are diminished in any way other than a little more compact.

At last year's Young's Plant Farm Annual Garden Tour in Auburn, Alabama we were shocked at the Supertunia Mini Vista petunias not only during the tour in June but with their photos from the end of July. They even raved about their beauty and rugged nature in what was one of the hottest summers in memory.

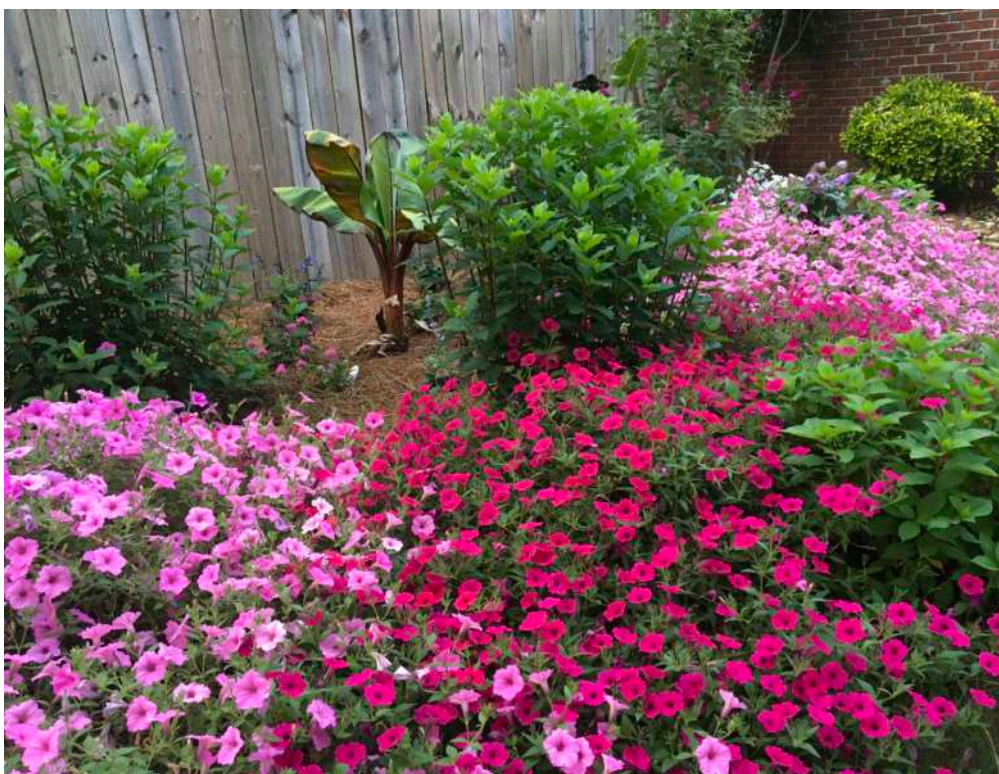
Then there are the regular Supertunias. Nothing regular here, stars, stripes, doubles and the best of multicolored petunias in the world. Petunias like Daybreak Charm, Persimmon, Picasso in Purple and this year's new Hoopla Vivid Orchid will take your breath away.

Many consider Supertunias the ultimate component combination plants in designer type mixed containers.

Then Master Gardener, Andrea Owens Schnapp in Walton County, Flo., demonstrated they are the picture-perfect-petunias for mono culture, or petunias without partners. Her glazed containers of Supertunia Persimmon and another with Supertunia Raspberry Rush were suitable for magazine covers.

The Garden Guy is always gearing his garden up for pollinators and I am pleased to report that Eastern Tiger, Spicebush and Pipevine Swallowtails all place Supertunias on the menu. Let the Supertunia Summer begin this weekend!

Follow me on Facebook @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy for more photos and garden inspiration.



Supertunia Vista petunias have a record of being the best for the landscape. This May photo of The Garden Guy's house shows Supertunia Vista Bubblegum, Paradise and Silverberry in the distance, all of which were planted in early October.



Supertunia Mini Vista petunias give gardeners 10 great choices for beauty and rugged performance. Here Supertunia Mini Vista Indigo petunia is showing out in a raised bed in July at the Young's Plant Farm Trial Garden in Auburn, Ala. (Photos courtesy Norman Winter)



# Noble Learning:

## Discover the Power of Observation: A Guide to Tracking and Enhancing Your Regenerative Ranching Transition

By Maddy Bezner, Noble Research Institute

Observation is the cornerstone of a regenerative mindset on a ranch. Because it marries immediate responsiveness with monitoring over time, it can help you adapt effectively to your environment's ever-changing dynamics.

Noble Research Institute regenerative ranching advisor Caitlin Word says the ability to observe and record land and livestock changes is a powerful entry point for individuals new to regenerative ranching, who might find extensive data collection and scientific methodologies daunting.

"At its core, regenerative ranching revolves around enhancing soil health and ecosystem resilience. Observational skills are crucial because they offer immediate insights into the environment's health," Word says.

What one sees above ground – a lush grass cover or a patch of bare soil – reflects the complex interplay of biological processes occurring beneath the surface. Word, a seasoned regenerative ranching expert, emphasizes the importance of understanding these visual cues.

"Observing these signs provides direct feedback on our management practices and their effects on the land," she says. "Everything you see above the ground tells you about what's happening below it."

Whether it's plant health, soil conditions, or livestock behavior,



Observation can help you adapt effectively to your environment's ever-changing dynamics.

each observation can inform decisions that lead to healthier, more productive land.

### Observation Tool 1: Journaling

One of the simplest yet most effective tools is journaling. Word explains that keeping a detailed record of daily observations can transform how you manage land.

"Journaling is as easy as noting that a particular plant appeared where it hadn't before, or that

livestock exhibited certain behaviors on a new pasture," she says. "Many ranchers already keep detailed records, like entries in a little red book, such as noting that a cow was limping on her left front foot today. This method can also be applied to ecological observations."

For instance, if you notice a new plant species or a wildflower that you can't identify, it's beneficial to document it and pos-

sibly research it later. Likewise, recording environmental changes like significant rainfall or signs of erosion can be compelling.

"Just as some ranchers record daily rainfall, why not extend this practice to include other ecological observations?" Word asks. "This habit not only keeps a record of changes in your pasture, but it also boosts your awareness and understanding of the environment, helping you make more informed





management decisions.”

These records build over time, creating a comprehensive picture of the ecological shifts and enabling you to track progress and identify issues early.

### Observation Tool 2:

#### Photo Documentation

Word says that along with written records, photo documentation stands out as a strategic observational tool.

“You see your pasture every day, and just like watching a child grow, the gradual changes might escape you,” she says.

By taking regular photos – preferably at the same time each year – you can make side-by-side comparisons to visually gauge changes in plant density, species diversity and land cover.

“To effectively monitor changes in your pasture, it’s important to select representative areas for photo documentation,” Word says.

If there are specific areas you are actively working to improve, document these as well.

“For example, if an area doesn’t look great right now, take a photo of it and aim to capture its improvement over the next year,” she says.

Word recommends setting up fixed points in your pasture for yearly photos. These fixed points can be marked with something as simple as a brightly colored T-post or a distinctive natural feature like a rock. This method ensures consistency in the photos, making year-to-year comparisons meaningful and informative. (Read more about setting up monitoring sites at <https://www.noble.org/regenerative-agriculture/new-item-for-ranch-spring-to-do-list-set-up-a-monitoring-site-to-measure-regenerative-progress/>.)

### Observation Tool 3:

#### Grazing Enclosures

Another practical tool is the use of grazing enclosures. These are small areas fenced off to prevent grazing, thereby serving as control sites you can use to compare natural vegetation growth against

grazed areas.

“It’s a direct way to see how grazing impacts your land,” Word says. “When you use grazing enclosures, they serve as a reference point for evaluating forage utilization. A designated reference point allows you to see how extensively the forage has been grazed down.”

Additionally, if certain plants are being selected preferentially, this can lead to overgrazing of those species and give other plants a chance to proliferate. Word says you can observe this phenomenon in your grazing enclosure.


“Plants once prevalent in the pasture might be found intact within the enclosure, indicating they were grazed out in the surrounding areas. This clearly indicates the plant community dynamics and the degree of forage utilization – essentially, how much forage was consumed or trampled by the livestock.”

By comparing exclosed areas with grazed ones, you can assess how your grazing strategies may affect plant diversity and soil health and then adjust your practices based on what you observe.

#### Integrating Observations with Soil Health Principles

Ultimately, the practice of observation ties back to the fundamental principles of soil health, which should always guide your regenerative ranching transition.

If you’re ready to dive deeper into regenerative ranching, resources like the Noble Land Essentials course offer extensive guidance about both observational and data-driven management practices. As you grow more comfortable with basic observations, you can gradually incorporate more detailed data collection. Word says this adaptive approach is key to growing a regenerative mindset.

Word says that by starting with these simple observation tools, you can not only enhance your immediate understanding of your land but also lay the groundwork for more sophisticated environmental management. 



By taking regular photos – preferably at the same time each year – you can make side-by-side comparisons to visually gauge changes in plant density, species diversity and land cover. (Photos courtesy Noble Research Institute)

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# Grazing North Texas

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

## Here Comes the Sun

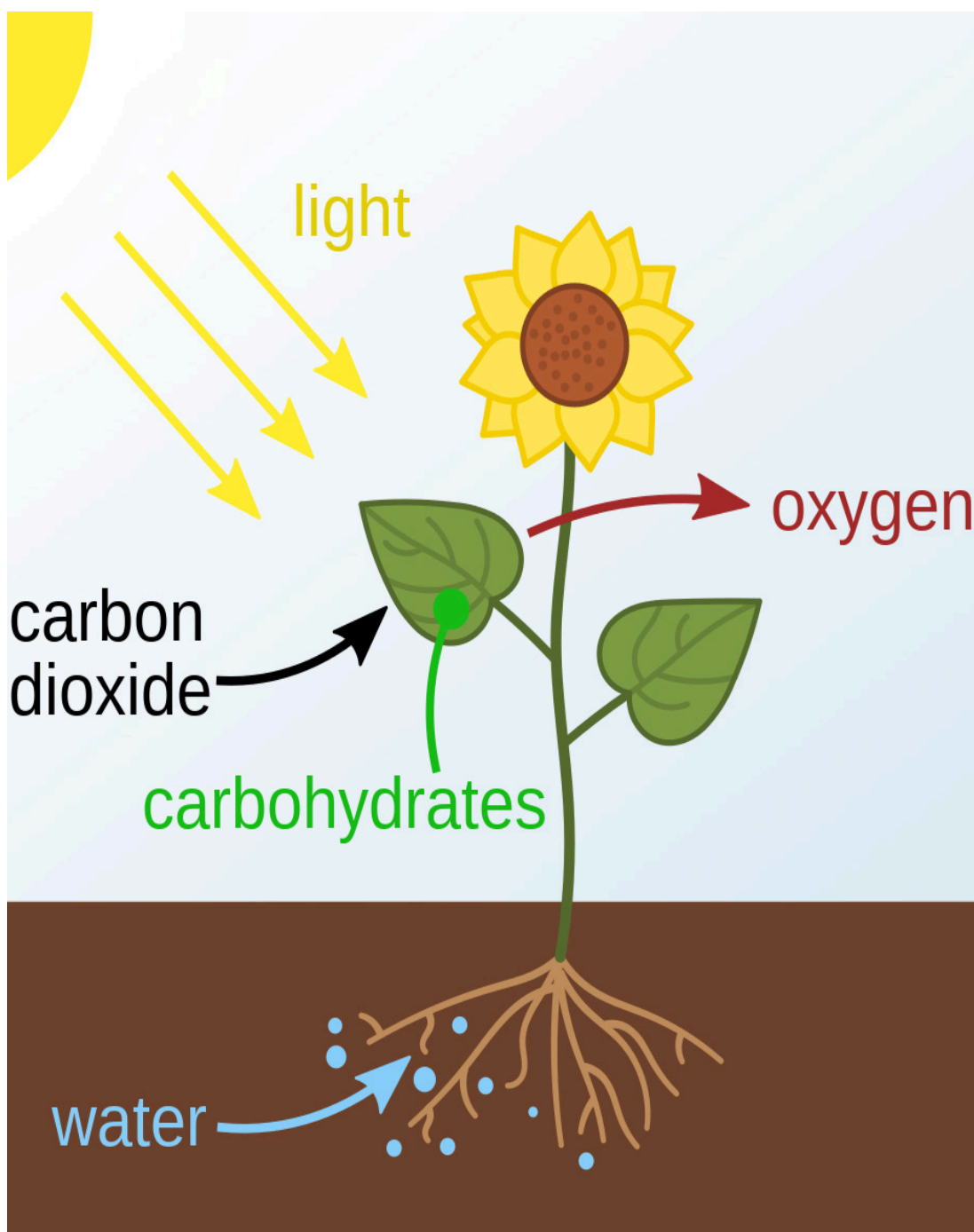
We all take the sun for granted. If we're building fence on a hot July day, we try to hide from it. If we are pulling a calf on a cold January morning, we welcome a few rays coming our way. Either way, it's always there.

We can't live without the sun. We depend on it not only for our lives, but also for our livelihood as ranchers. As part of his gift to us, God gave the process of photosynthesis. This is how grasses grow.

Photosynthesis is the process plants use to sustain themselves. Plants gather water and nutrients from the soil and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Using the sun's energy, the plant produces oxygen along with energy for growth in the form of sugar.

In managing cattle, the more we understand about the mothering instinct, and the herding instinct, the better job we do in livestock management. A big part of managing our grazing lands is understanding how plants respond to sunlight. Some plants want to maximize their exposure to it, and some prefer a more limited amount. Texas bluegrass has a wide range of sunlight adaptation. Texas bluegrass is a highly palatable native cool season perennial that can grow in open pasture or in shaded areas. When subjected to years of heavy grazing pressure, it decreases in open areas but can maintain a presence in shaded brushy areas not subject to heavy grazing. When we can incorporate well-planned rotation grazing into our management, Texas bluegrass can reappear in open pasture.

A good example this year of how sunlight influences our production systems relates to the heavy cover of annual winter grasses across most



Photosynthesis is the process plants use to sustain themselves. Plants gather water and nutrients from the soil and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Using the sun's energy, the plant produces oxygen along with energy for growth in the form of sugar. (Photo courtesy Wikipedia)



Texas bluegrass can survive in open pasture with maximum sun or in the protection of shaded areas.



North Texas pastures. Due to beneficial rainfall, these annual grasses have established tall canopy that covers the soil and allows little sunlight to reach our low-growing grasses such as blue grama. This will delay development of such grasses as the gramas until the annual plants have deteriorated. The taller grasses, like Indiangrass, are rising above the annual growth.

Sunlight also becomes a factor in brushy pastures. If you are considering controlling mesquite in an area, at what point do you decide to get started and implement a control practice such as spraying or dozing? For many of us, we get serious about it when we start having trouble finding our cattle. This is about the same time the mesquites start shading enough of the ground so the summer grasses are suffering for sunlight. If mesquite pastures are allowed to get thick enough, the summer grasses will mostly disappear and be replaced by Texas witegrass.

Having a good stand of healthy summer perennial grasses is a better production goal than grazing a solid stand of Texas witegrass.



These Sleepy daisies are among our greatest sun lovers. As the sun comes up in the East, they turn their flowers directly toward the sun and they follow the sun as it moves across the sky each day. When the sun goes down, they are all pointing toward the West. (Photos courtesy Tony Dean)



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By Jelly Cocanougher

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