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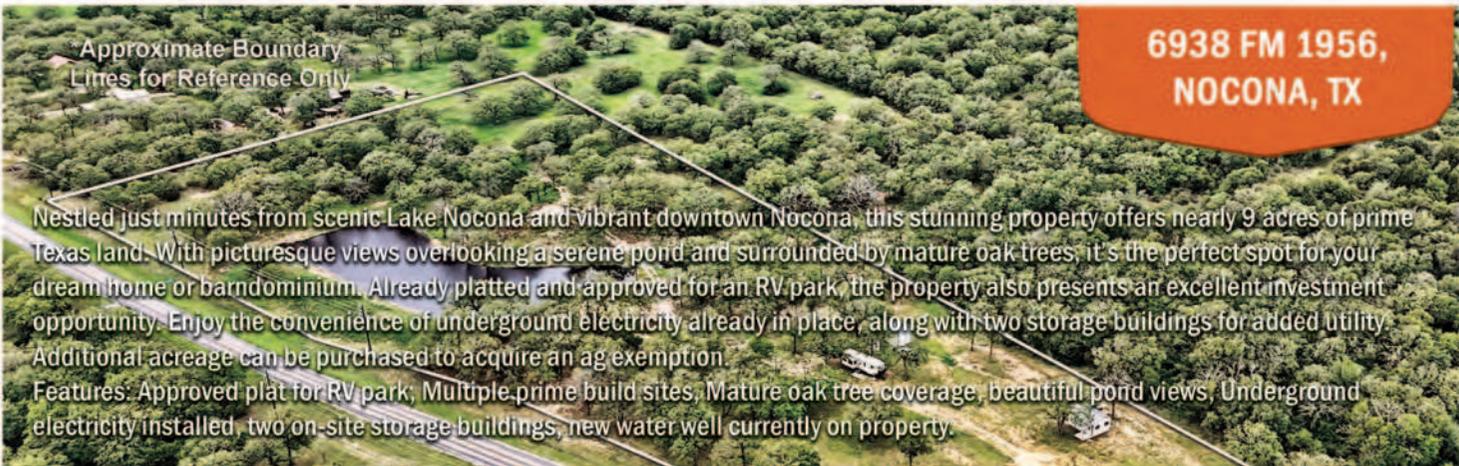
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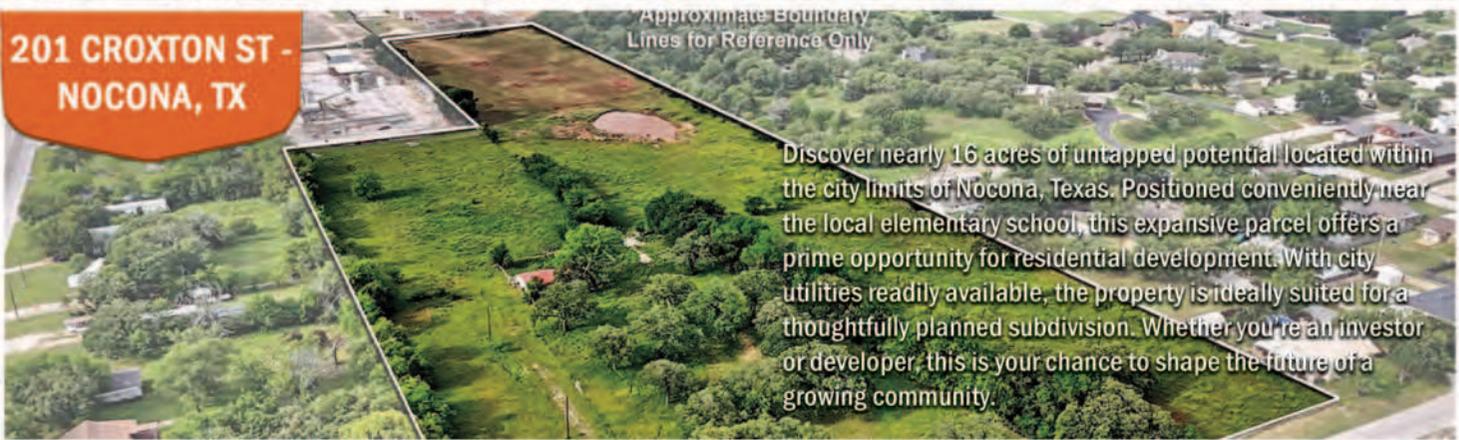
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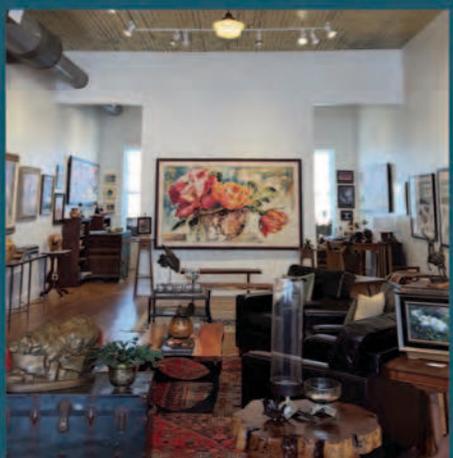


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ON THE COVER



Ali Anderson is a veterinary advisor and lifelong horsewoman who blends her love for horses with her talent for painting. (Photo by Steed & Hound, courtesy of Ali Anderson)

letter from the editor

With fall just around the corner, we're reminded that change is a constant part of life. As the days start to cool and the season shifts, it's a good time to reflect on the work we've put in and what's still to come. Fall is a season of harvest, reflection, and preparation - perfect for taking stock of where we are and planning for the future.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1, we read, "To everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." This verse reminds us that life has its seasons too - times for hard work, growth, and rest. Fall offers us a chance to enjoy the fruits of our labor and set ourselves up for the next steps.

As always, we'd love to hear from you. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates, and if you have a story idea, email me at Editor@NTFROnline.com.

Here's to a new season and what's ahead.



Savannah Magoteaux
Savannah Magoteaux, Editor
editor@ntfronline.com

CONTENTS



pg. 26 Alison Anderson - Western Art



pg. 58 The Garden Guy - Muhly Grasses



pg. 19 Introduction to Coturnix Quail



pg. 16 Grazing North Texas

10

Noble Learning

Read about collaborating to find better solutions for your farm or ranch.

14

Land Market Report

Jared Groce gives an update on land sales in the North Texas area.

32

Horse Health

Dr. Garrett Metcalf discusses splint bone injuries in horses and treatment.

50

Strait To the Heart

Dave Alexander shares about George Strait's benefit for Texas flood relief.

58

Garden Tips

Trish Gedon reminds us all to make sure to do fall cleanup in our gardens.

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The Ranger's Cabin

By Bryce Angell

The higher mountain, autumn air came early with a bite. We made our stop at the ranger station cabin for the night.

We locked the horses in the barn. Each got a share of oats. Then grabbed our saddlebags along with heavy overcoats.

The outpost cabin's Franklin Stove was ready for a fire. We chopped some kindling, lit a match, and watched the flames grow higher.

We warmed our hands, then held our boots above the stove for heat. I finally rubbed some circulation back to my cold feet.

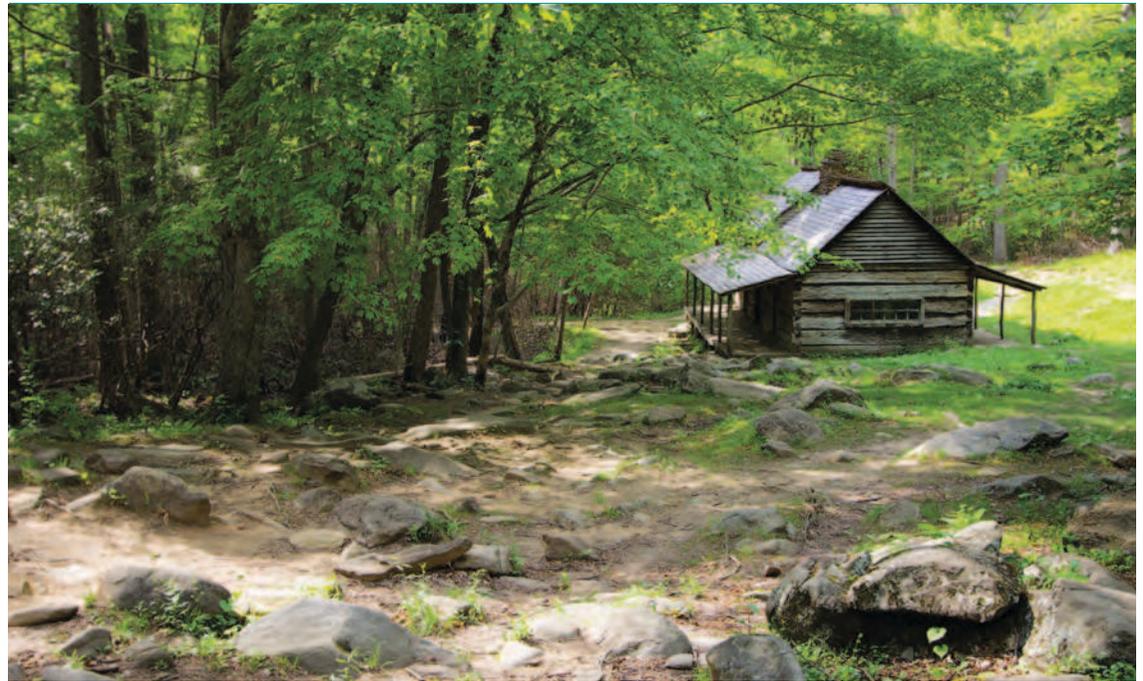
The rustic old guard station was now feeling toasty warm. We'd stay here for the night and weather out the mountain storm.

Our Coleman propane lantern gave us precious light to see. It must have been nostalgia, at least a feeling over me.

I gazed around the quarters, not a plug-in on the wall. No internet to check on and no cell phone use at all.

I only could imagine 'bout this cabin long ago. Two rangers eating biscuits, prob'ly made from sourdough.

One ranger was much older. He was tall and extra lean. His face was weather chiseled, didn't show



(Courtesy photo)

an ounce of mean.

The other ranger, young in years, yet smart enough to know he could profit more from listening than just to talk for show.

Were they eating steaks of venison or rations from canned beef? Did the younger get a sip of gin that later caused him grief?

Did they talk about their lives out in the vastness all alone? The older ranger said this was the only

life he'd known.

I'm sure he told the young buck, "Just keep thinkin' 'bout your work. Those gals are mighty pretty, but they'll drive you plumb berserk!"

They finished eating supper. The oldest rolled a Bull Durham smoke. The younger ranger moved on back. Tobacco made him choke.

They washed and dried the

dishes. Dumped the coffee from the pot. Then they turned in for the evening, sleeping bag and army cot.

The rangers used the cabin for their safety and for rest. Now it's used for recreation. Did the rangers ever guess?

Has the cabin seen life's changes from the day that it was new? And does it miss the rangers over men like me and you? 

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Noble Learning:

Collaborating to Find Better Solutions

By Laura Brenner

Most ranchers and farmers are wary of strange people and technology on their land, but Texas rancher Andy Popp has repeatedly opened his gates so researchers can use his land to benefit his industry.

Popp, the owner of Popp Farms at El Campo, Texas, participates in field research as a way to learn more about his land and create value for the next generation. Popp's journey from conventional grain farmer to regenerative agriculture advocate has been defined by a willingness to try new things and a desire to leave the land better than he found it.

Transitioning the Land

Popp didn't start out with a plan to become a regenerative land manager. He began his career helping with his family's grain operation while working in a factory. But when the opportunity came in 2003 to lease and run the family farm full time, he took the leap.

"I still kept it as a grain operation with a few cattle," he recalls. That changed after the death of his father and the realization that he wanted an operation he could manage solo, without seasonal labor and the grind of harvest season.

That pivot led him toward using less-conventional conservation practices that promised to reduce labor and costs. At the time, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offered incentive programs for farmers



Regenerative rancher Andy Popp finds multiple benefits from saying "yes" to taking part in field research projects. (Photos courtesy of Noble Research Institute)

to incorporate no-till and cover cropping. Popp took advantage of their resources and became one of the early adopters of these conservation practices in his area, even speaking at events to share his experiences.

“Then I got intrigued with the regenerative side of it,” Popp says, “and decided to tie all that together and gear more toward regenerative management.”

The appeal was more than philosophical - it was practical. Regenerative systems, he found, allowed him to spread labor out through the year and reduce dependency on expensive inputs.

As he explored regenerative management and adaptive grazing, he also saw potential in adding goats to his operation.

Where he has the goats, it’s helped with brush management, Popp says. “I’ve been able to reduce chemical use.”

He says he views that as more than a benefit to his bottom line, as it aligns with his philosophy of management.

“I guess you have to be wired a little differently to get enjoyment out of knowing what you’re improving down in the ground versus just what’s up above that everybody sees.”

Supplying Real-World Data

While regenerative practices intrigued him, it was access to real-world data that convinced him to participate in the Metrics, Management, and Monitoring: An Investigation of Pasture and Rangeland Soil Health and Its Drivers (3M) field research project - a collaborative study by Noble Research Institute and other institutions exploring regenerative systems’ environmental and economic impacts.

He wanted “to get the data,” he says. “To get information to help us try to run our operation more efficiently. That was the reason I got involved.”

What makes Popp’s story compelling is his repeated willingness to host scientific equipment on

his land. He’s taken part in field research projects in the past and found value in the experience. In his eyes, the 3M project couldn’t have been easier to jump into.

“It’s taken no work on my part, they take care of it all,” he says. “I get a notification when they’re going to come, I unlock the gate, and they lock the gate behind them on the way out. Most of the time they don’t even drive vehicles in there, they just walk in to repair their equipment or record data.”

The minimally invasive research setup on Popp Farms includes soil and water probes, a solar-powered weather monitoring tower and several remote sensors across the farm.

Popp is quick to point out that field research like this doesn’t serve only researchers or individual landowners - it has ripple effects across the industry.

“Every producer changes according to different data they read and hear about,” he says. “So somewhere, somebody has to (provide the land base) in order to get that data for all of us to improve our operations.”

That sense of collective responsibility and curiosity can be challenging to convey in an industry often suspicious of change.

Being “open-minded and ranching or farming seem to contradict a lot of times,” Popp says. He laughs as he admits that being raised in a German Catholic community made him aware of just how resistant some producers can be.

Perhaps due to some local skepticism about his regenerative methods, Popp has found more success leasing land from owners outside his immediate community.

“Some don’t want to see someone doing it differently than what they’ve done for 30 years,” he says. But those willing to partner with him benefit from improved soil health, decreased chemical inputs, and even reduced wild hog activity - thanks to well-designed goat fencing.

Supporting Future Generations

Participating in field research is also about creating opportunities for the next generation. His son, Colton, currently studying agribusiness and finance, is interested in returning to help with the operation. Popp is intentional about passing on the knowledge he’s gained - sending soil updates, financial screenshots and management notes to Colton to keep the learning going.

“I don’t want him to feel he has to do this,” he says. “But if he chooses to, that would be great.”

There’s also a quiet humility in Popp’s approach. He doesn’t see himself as a trailblazer, even if he is.

“I just kind of stay open-minded and deal with the info after I get it,” he says. “There’s usually something in there you can use to help improve your operation.”

In his first year with the 3M

project, he’s embraced new experiences like being interviewed for the mental wellness component of the research - something he says is rare in agriculture.

“At first I thought it was odd,” he says. “But then I thought, it makes a lot of sense. Somebody actually cares about the mental health of farmers and ranchers.”

Participating in field research isn’t as daunting as it might seem, Popp says, and he finds the benefits, both personal and industry-wide, worth it.

“It also doesn’t hurt that they pay you for your time,” he says.

Andy Popp isn’t chasing fads or trends or trying to prove a point. He’s chasing answers.

By staying open-minded and questioning the conventional, he’s shaping the future of agriculture - not just for his family, but for the soil, the science and the next generation of producers who will inherit the land. 

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Land Market Report

By Jared Groce

The rural real estate market in North Texas is still as sluggish as the rest of the national economy is, with a lot of uncertainty in the geo-political climate as well as doubts in the overall economy. Inflation is taking its toll on everyone these days, making it more difficult to purchase land for recreational or personal use. We are seeing a slight uptick in buys made by developers, especially in the more populated counties like Grayson, Collin and Denton. These projects take a lot of time to become a build-ready development, so that means that the developers are seeing a better economy in the next 12-18 months, in my opinion. Within the eight counties that I report on each month, the overall average price per acre for July 2025 was \$25,861 per acre. I think we can all agree that there are not too many crops that we can grow to pay that kind of land price, so the highest and best use for most land in our area is no longer for general agriculture use. While there may be some ag enterprises that can make those prices pay off, the majority of us cannot sustain that with the income we can produce off of one acre.

None of us truly own the land - we are just the stewards of it for the next generation, so be kind to it and manage it with love and care. After all, they're not making any more of it. Remember, the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago - the second best time is today. The same is true for buying land. 

COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	\$ ACRE	LIST \$	SOLD \$	SALE / LIST	DOM
CLAY	BELLEVUE	92.33	\$7,473	\$735,000	\$690,000	93.90%	87
CLAY	HENRIETTA	216	\$4,630	\$1,080,000	\$1,000,000	92.60%	113
	AVG	154.17	\$6,051	\$907,500	\$845,000	93.20%	100
COLLIN	FARMERSVILLE	204	\$51,471	\$12,240,000	\$10,500,000	85.80%	107
	AVG	204	\$51,471	\$12,240,000	\$10,500,000	85.80%	107
COOKE	GAINESVILLE	11.93	\$20,961	\$329,000	\$250,000	76.00%	94
COOKE	WHITESBORO	10.79	\$38,943	\$499,000	420000	84.20%	7
COOKE	VALLEY VIEW	13	\$36,538	\$475,000	\$475,000	100.00%	48
COOKE	COLLINSVILLE	121.51	\$27,500	\$3,645,270	\$3,341,497	91.70%	224
	AVG	39.31	\$30,986	\$1,237,068	\$1,121,624	88.00%	93
DENTON	KRUM	10.1	\$21,287	\$252,500	\$215,000	85.10%	7
DENTON	SANGER	25.3	\$18,778	\$475,000	\$475,000	100.00%	49
DENTON	pilot point	40	\$100,000	\$4,400,000	\$4,000,000	90.90%	6
	AVG	25.13	\$46,688	\$1,709,167	\$1,563,333	92.00%	27
GRAYSON	DENISON	10	\$21,993	\$255,000	\$220,000	86.30%	210
GRAYSON	WHITESBORO	25.2	\$9,000	\$250,000	\$226,809	90.70%	62
GRAYSON	COLLINSVILLE	25.62	\$30,995	\$896,315	\$794,065	88.60%	72
GRAYSON	GUNTER	75	\$53,333	\$4,275,000	\$4,000,000	93.60%	726
	AVG	33.96	\$28,830	\$1,419,079	\$1,310,219	89.80%	268
JACK	BRYSON	20.28	\$11,095	\$265,000	\$225,000	84.90%	171
JACK	BOWIE	25	\$13,000	\$337,500	\$325,000	96.30%	312
JACK	POOLVILLE	54.54	\$9,787	\$593,730	\$533,803	89.90%	341
JACK	JACKSBORO	460	\$5,769	\$2,990,000	\$2,653,969	88.80%	354
	AVG	139.96	\$9,913	\$1,046,558	\$934,443	90.00%	295
MONTAGUE	SAINT JO	10	\$11,800	\$160,000	\$118,000	73.80%	253
MONTAGUE	NOCONA	15.85	\$16,088	\$269,450	\$255,000	94.60%	1156
MONTAGUE	FORESTBURG	10.01	\$27,473	\$289,950	\$275,000	94.80%	10
MONTAGUE	BOWIE	32.06	\$9,502	\$310,000	\$304,650	98.30%	147
MONTAGUE	SAINT JO	55	\$10,364	\$577,500	\$570,000	98.70%	95
	AVG	24.58	\$15,045	\$321,380	\$304,520	92.00%	332
WISE	CHICO	13.21	\$15,137	\$210,000	\$200,000	95.20%	326
WISE	ALVORD	20.49	\$17,082	\$369,000	\$350,000	94.90%	10
WISE	PARADISE	26.68	\$14,055	\$430,000	\$375,000	87.20%	52
WISE	BOYD	50	\$15,447	\$900,000	\$772,365	85.80%	451
WISE	BOYD	21.4	\$37,150	\$935,000	\$795,000	85.00%	42
WISE	POOLVILLE	164.04	\$8,535	\$1,623,956	\$1,400,000	86.20%	62
	AVG	49.3	\$17,901	\$744,659	\$648,728	89.10%	157

Biosecurity on the Farm

By Barry Whitworth, DVM



Biosecurity is one of the best disease prevention methods available to livestock producers. (Courtesy photos)

There have been plenty of events in recent years - such as African Swine Fever in China or Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea at the Oklahoma Youth Expo - that have shown how vulnerable livestock operations and events are. These and other diseases could have a devastating impact on livestock producers in the state. The best defense against these threats is a good biosecurity plan. If producers do not have a biosecurity protocol, they need to develop one and if they have one, they should review it.

What is biosecurity? “Bio” is life and “security” is protection.

Biosecurity is the development and implementation of management procedures to reduce or prevent unwanted threats from entering a herd or flock. The protocol is designed to reduce or prevent the spread of these threats through the herd or flock if a pathogen does enter the herd or flock. Lastly, a biosecurity plan is designed to prevent the threat from infecting neighboring livestock operations.

Biosecurity is one of the best disease prevention methods available to livestock producers. It cost very little to implement, but it can be a challenge to maintain the program. When reviewing the

2014-2015 Avian Influenza outbreak, failure to follow biosecurity protocol was the main reason given for the spread of the virus. To have any realistic chance of a biosecurity program being successful, all parties involved in the operation must be willing to fully participate. If one person fails to comply with the protocol, the program is doomed to fail.

Biosecurity can be broken down in to four basic areas which include traffic, isolation, sanitation, and husbandry. Livestock producers must attempt to control traffic on their operation. Livestock operations should have a

perimeter buffer area. For ranches, this would be the perimeter fence. For poultry operation, this could be the fence that surrounds the poultry house. All entry points need to be clearly marked with “Do Not Enter” signs. Producers should not allow anyone to enter the area where animals are kept unless it is absolutely necessary. People may unknowingly carry dangerous organisms on their clothes or shoes. If visitors are allowed on the premises, producers should make sure that they wear clean clothes and shoes. Producers should provide disposal shoe covers and a place to wash hands and

dip shoes before and after entering the farm. Any producer that visits another livestock operation should shower and change clothes and shoes before having contact with his or her own animals.

Owners must also attempt to discourage contact with other animals domestic and wild. Making sure that the ranch is kept clean and free of brush will discourage wild animals. All feed should be kept in feed bins or storage containers to prevent attracting wild animals. Rodents and insects should be controlled. Cattle, and especially pregnant cows, should be discouraged from having nose to nose contact with neighboring cattle. This can be accomplished by placing an electric wire inside the perimeter fence. Producers should discourage visitors from bringing their animals to the operation. These animals may carry a pathogen on their bodies or be sick and infect other animals.

Isolation is another practice that will aid in keeping a herd free from a preventable disease. Ideally, producers should maintain a closed herd. If this is not possible, animals should be purchased from a reputable seed stock producer. All new animals need to be tested for diseases and placed in quarantine for a minimum of 30 days and observed for any signs of illness before being added to the herd. If producers are involved in showing livestock, show animals should be placed in quarantine upon returning from an exhibition.

Also, any animal that shows signs of illness needs to be isolated from the herd. When animals are in quarantine, they should be fed after all other chores have been completed to prevent exposure to other animals. Producers do not want to bring home diseases or borrow diseases from their neighbors.

Sanitation should be a top priority in all operations. All food and water troughs should be kept cleaned. Lots, pens, barns and cages should be kept free of



Sanitation should be a top priority in all operations. All food and water troughs should be kept cleaned.

manure build up. If equipment such as a frontend loader is used for dual purposes such as manure management and feeding, it needs to be cleaned and disinfected between jobs. Avoid borrowing equipment from neighbors. If it is necessary to borrow some item, producers should clean and disinfect it before and after using it. Feeding and haying areas should be moved regularly to prevent manure build up. Any feed spills should be cleaned immediately to avoid attracting wildlife. After traveling to shows, fairs or livestock auctions, trucks and trailers should be washed and disinfected. All show equipment needs to be cleaned and disinfected after being

used. Maintaining a clean environment for your animals will go a long way in preventing diseases.

Animals that are provided with good care are more likely to remain healthy and resist infections. Animals need a good source of clean water. Their nutritional needs should be met. They should be provided protection from harsh environmental conditions. It may sound unnecessary to mention, but all livestock owners should be familiar with normal animal behavior. Any deviation from normal behavior should be investigated. They should know the warning signs of an infection. Most importantly, they should report any unusually large numbers of sick or

dead animals to their veterinarian, or state veterinarian.

Livestock producers that would like more information about biosecurity may want to read APHIS fact sheet Biosecurity: Protecting Your Livestock and Poultry at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/fs_bio_sec_07.pdf.

For a detailed biosecurity plan for poultry producers go to healthybirds.aphis.usda.gov or check out Oklahoma State University fact sheet Small Flock Biosecurity for Prevention of Avian Influenza ANSI-8301 at the local county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service office. 

Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean, tonydean.tx1@gmail.com

Annual Threawn



Annual threawn is native to most of North America, but has very little grazing value. (Photos courtesy of Tony Dean)

The threawns are a rather large family of grasses in North Texas grazing lands. There are up to 11 different species, about half

of them annuals and the rest perennials. They all have at least one common identifying trait which is the presence of three hair-like

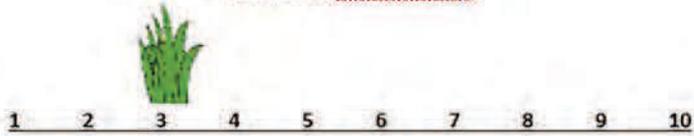
awns arranged like helicopter blades above each small seed.

As its name indicates, Annual threawn must come up from seed

each year. Bunches grow from 6 to 20 inches tall and can branch at the stems. The seeds mature in late summer, and once mature

Grazing Value of This Plant

Annual Threeawn



Annual Threeawn has a grazing value of three of 10.

become rigid and capable of attaching themselves to any object that touches the plants. If you have walked through pastures in low-quarter shoes, you probably got a few threeawn seeds in your sox. The stiff seeds can get caught in mouths and eyes of livestock and contaminate wool and mohair

This grass does have one redeeming value. It is considered a pioneer grass because it is an aggressive invader and quickly establishes on areas of bare or depleted soil, thereby furnishing at least some cover on the land to

protect against erosion. It is also called Oldfield threeawn or Prairie threeawn.

Annual threeawn can be considered a DECOM grass, standing for “don’t ever count on me”. Don’t be fooled by a few green leaves in early spring, it will soon become more of a liability.

Proper grazing management is a good way to eventually reduce the amount of Annual threeawn in a pasture. If the better grasses are healthy and increasing, they will begin to crowd out the Annual threeawn. 



Annual threeawn branches at the stem.



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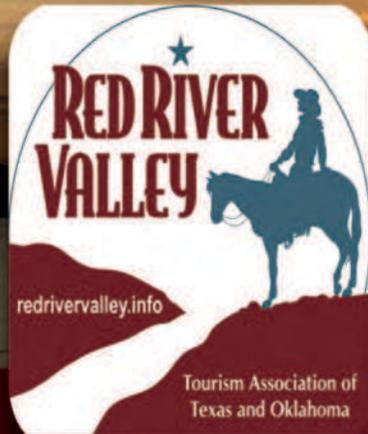
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Introduction to Coturnix Quail

By Landon Moore



If you've purchased quail meat from a store, chances are it came from a Coturnix aviary. (Photos courtesy of Landon Moore)

In recent years, small-scale home meat production has seen a significant rise, driven by growing interest in homesteading, rising food prices, and increasing concerns over the source and quality of store-bought meat. While some still opt for traditional livestock like steers or feeder pigs, others are turning to smaller, more efficient options. For those looking to maximize production with limited space, keeping a few litters of fryer rabbits or a couple pens of broilers is often more appealing. But there's another avian option gaining popularity: Coturnix quail. These birds combine the efficiency and versatility of poultry

with the small space requirements and high fertility of rabbits, making them an excellent choice for the homesteader.

Coturnix quail (*Coturnix japonica*), also known as Japanese quail, dominates the domesticated quail market. If you've purchased quail meat from a store, chances are it came from a Coturnix aviary. While many are familiar with Bobwhite quail, the larger cousins of Coturnix, Bobwhites are less efficient, requiring more space and a longer growth period. They may reach sexual maturity later, lay fewer eggs, and take up more room in the yard, making Coturnix the better choice for those look-

ing to maximize their efforts in smaller spaces.

Standard Coturnix quail typically weigh between six and eight ounces, with "jumbo" lines reaching up to a pound. The meat yield is approximately 65%, meaning four standard quail will yield a pound of meat. While the larger jumbos take a bit longer to mature, they are ideal for those prioritizing meat production. The jumbos also lay larger eggs but produce them less frequently. For egg production, the standard Coturnix quail is hard to beat, with each hen laying almost every day for their productive lifespan of about two years. Their egg-laying efficiency is far

superior to other poultry species, with three quail eggs equaling one chicken egg. However, the eggs are more fragile, so they require careful handling.

The wild phenotype of Coturnix quail is tan with dark spots on the females' breasts and a solid red patch on the males. Many other colors are available, but these tend to be more expensive and aren't always auto-sexed by their feathers. While it's possible to sex them by hand with a bit of practice, being able to do so visually would save a lot of time, especially since vent-sexing is most reliable when the birds reach

continued on page 20

continued from page 19

around eight weeks of age.

What sets Coturnix quail apart is their comfort in cages. Unlike other birds, they aren't territorial and thrive in a high-density environment, as long as a ratio of at least three hens to one rooster is maintained. The quail do best when stocked at a density of three birds per square foot, which may sound high but aligns with their nervous nature. Watch out for overly aggressive roosters, as they can terrorize the whole pen if left unchecked.

Cages should be at least 14 inches tall to avoid injury from their instinctive leaping when frightened. Most pens feature a slanted floor that extends under the door to allow eggs to roll out. Cage plans can easily be found online. The floor wire should be half an inch by one inch, and the sides should be one by two inches to allow the birds to stick their heads through, making it easier to attach a feeder outside the cage and reduce feed waste.

Quail produce a significant amount of manure due to their high metabolism. If using trays, they should be changed daily or every other day. A simple design for three stacked cages with trays on legs can help maximize space. Alternatively, a more complex system using angled metal sheets can channel waste into a gutter. Metal flashing can also be attached to the interior edges of pens as manure guards, preventing waste from spilling out.

Quail are not prone to cannibalism or egg consumption if provided unlimited feed and water, though they can damage eggs if they are within reach too long. As with other poultry, quail can panic if their feed runs out, so it's essential to ensure a constant supply. Adult quail need two tablespoons of around 20% protein feed daily. While specialized rations are available, turkey/gamebird feed works well for most situations. It's best to use an outside feeder



to prevent feed waste since quail instinctively scratch at feed.

When acquiring stock, you have three main options: eggs, juveniles (3 to 6 weeks old), or adults. Adult birds are the most expensive but produce immediately. Juveniles save time and money, but they still require some growth. Eggs are often the best choice, as you'll be hatching future stock anyway. You can find eggs from many hatcheries online, often with a 50% hatch rate for shipped eggs.

Eggs should be incubated at 99.5 degrees with 45% humidity for about 17 days. On day 14, lock down the incubator and adjust the humidity to 70%. Hatchlings are tiny and fragile, but mortality is typically around 10-15%. Once the first quail hatch, set up a heat lamp for their brooder. A large plastic tub with pine shaving bedding works well. Never assist in the hatching process, and don't remove the lid while they are hatching. After the first 24 hours,

you can safely remove the chicks.

Quail-sized quart waterers, available at most feed stores, should be used, as the chicks can drown in standard-sized waterers. For the first couple of days, offer warm water with a teaspoon of sugar dissolved in it to help the chicks rehydrate. They need a minimum of 28% protein for the first seven weeks, after which they can transition to adult feed. After three weeks, move the quail to grow-out pens, where they can tolerate heat or cold. At five to six weeks, the hens will begin laying eggs, and the roosters will start breeding. At this point, you can sort the birds and select the best as breeders. The others can be butchered, either now or at 10-12 weeks, depending on the size and quality desired.

From incubating eggs to butchering takes only about 11 weeks. With each hen laying an egg nearly every day, you can quickly grow your flock, providing both



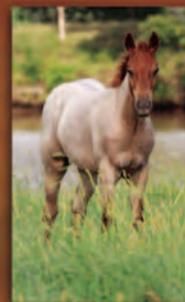
eggs and meat for your table. These tiny birds are incredibly productive, offering a consistent supply of eggs and meat for a small space, making them an ideal choice for homesteaders looking to maximize their production. 

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What did one cowboy say to another when his horse wouldn't leave the barn?
"Looks like he's stalling again."
Why did the sheep go to the

party?
Because he was a baa-d boy!
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Why did the rancher start a band?
Because he was really good at playing the cowbell!

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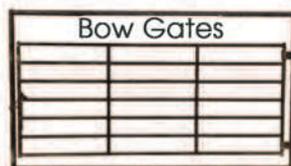


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PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK



September in Montana and Wyoming means shipping yearlings out, pre-conditioning calves and the beginning of hunting season. This is Steamboat Rock on the Big Horn Mountains that was burned over by the Elk Fire in 2024 about this time last year. 

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# ALI ANDERSON

Ali Anderson combines her passion for horses with her love of art, capturing moments from everyday life in her paintings. A veterinary advisor by profession, Anderson brings a unique perspective to Western art, often focusing on the small, meaningful moments that horse people can relate to.

TOPHAND



# WESTERN ARTIST



Story by Blanche Schaefer  
Photos courtesy of Ali Anderson



Top: Ali has ridden a variety of disciplines her whole life. Right: Ali has been published in several medical journals and textbooks. (Photos courtesy of Ali Anderson)

When Ali Anderson picks up a paint brush, time stands still for the lifelong artist and horsewoman.

“The only two things I can say this about are horses and art, and it’s that flow state you get in when you’re working on something and you don’t even know time exists — you’re just engrossed in it,” Anderson said. “When I was a kid, we would all watch TV together, and I was never interested in what my parents watched, so I would sit there with a sketch pad or a dry erase board and draw instead of watching TV. As I’ve gotten older, I love catching those little moments and breathing them, and

art allows you to do that.”

Her artistic nature stems from her childhood, and creating art has always been a part of Anderson’s life.

“My mom was an art major in college, and there never was a time as kids that we weren’t doing art. I started taking lessons in first grade and through elementary school, and then in junior high and high school I took a gifted arts class every day. That was really impactful,” Anderson explained. “I had a really good teacher, and from there, I’ve always played around with doing commissions and stuff like that. I didn’t really get into art shows until the last couple years.”

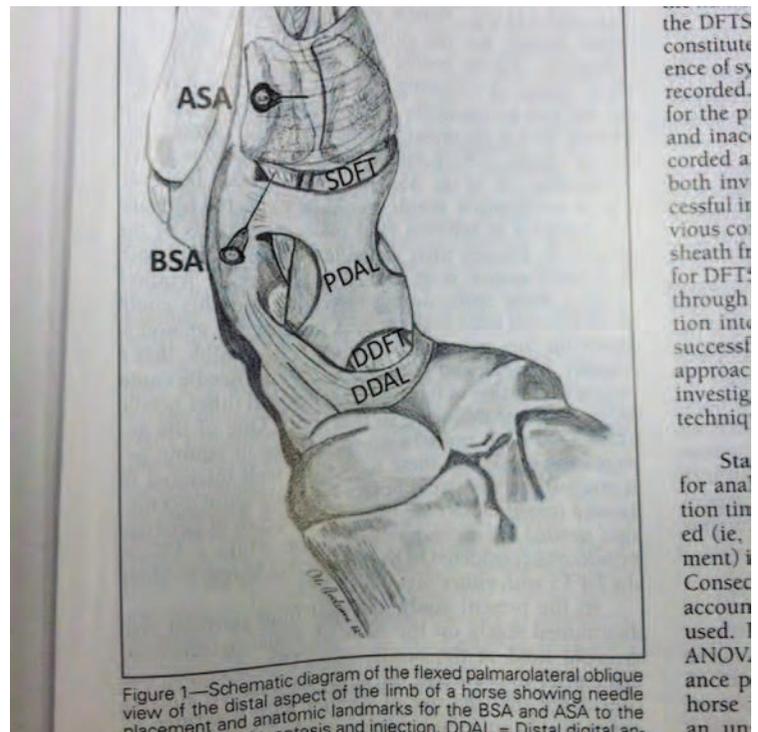


Figure 1—Schematic diagram of the flexed palmarolateral oblique view of the distal aspect of the limb of a horse showing needle placement and anatomic landmarks for the BSA and ASA to the placement and injection. DDAL = Distal digital an-

the DFTS constitute presence of sy recorded. for the p and inae corded a both inv cessful in vious co sheath fr for DFT through tion into successf approach investig techniq Sta for anal tion tim ed (ie, ment) i Consec account used. ANOV. ance p horse an un



The Springtown, Texas, resident currently works as a veterinary advisor for Platinum Performance, a nutrition company that creates supplements for horses, dogs and cats.

She has spent most of her life working in the veterinary medical field as either a vet assistant or technician. She's been riding her whole life in a variety of disciplines, from English and saddle seat, to junior rodeo, to reined cow horse and then cutting, where she worked for a cutting trainer for over 10 years. Anderson currently rides and shows in ranch versatility and stock horse shows around the North Texas area.

Anderson's artwork and desire to create is both an outlet and a connection to her career and is fueled by many of the everyday moments she encounters with horses.

"During my time as a technician, I got published in several medical journals and textbooks

doing medical illustrations, which was a cool combo of my art and career," Anderson said. "My focus has always been animals, but it's evolved more toward Western art. Most of the time, I just see something in my life and think it would be a cool painting. Lately I've been working to take my own reference photos of something I know I want to paint, but it's just having the time to sit down and do it. I don't have an interest in painting regular horse show photos. I want to do the little moments — the horses tied to the rail, someone putting boots on their horses. I want it to be the moment that true horse people can appreciate."

She mostly works on canvas and uses acrylic or oil paints, depending on the kind of mood she wants the painting to convey and on the timeframe of pieces that might be entered in art shows.

"I sketch them out on canvas, and then it's layer by layer.

Acrylics are brighter, and oils are a little deeper, softer in color," she explained. "Oils take forever to dry, so that is the downfall. If you don't use a drying agent, they take six months to a year to completely cure. If I want to do a fall art show, I have to make sure the piece is done beginning of the year. Sometimes I'll do acrylic if I don't have time for oils to dry."

Using oil, Anderson recently won the "On Canvas" category at the Peach Fest Art Show in Weatherford, Texas, with her painting of a horse in a barn titled "The View."

"That one was oil, because I really wanted those warm tones and the moment was very peaceful, so I didn't want it quite as bright, whereas another one I did in acrylic was black and white, because I wanted that one to really pop," Anderson said. "I love doing little details, like in a horse's mane or your tack or hair. I try to keep my background simple since

I get more in-depth on the actual subject."

Anderson's passion for art goes beyond her own creations. She also handles publicity and social media for the Weatherford Art Association, helping promote local artists and art shows.

"We have some really amazing artists in this area. People don't realize how big of a Western art area the metroplex around Fort Worth is, so our shows are very competitive. We do three shows — the Member Show, the Peach Fest, and Spirit of the West, which is our biggest show and is only Western art," Anderson said. "Last year I got honorable mention in Spirit of the West and this year I got first at Peach Fest. Even getting honorable mention is exciting, because it's really hard — we have about 117 works, and there's some really cool paintings there."

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intimidating, but Anderson says it's all part of the process and a good reminder that appreciation of art is truly in the eye of the beholder.

In the end, horses and art always find a way to connect for Anderson.

"I have to remind myself it depends on what the judge likes, and you have to accept that," Anderson said. "I've had a lot of rejection this year because I've been trying to get into bigger shows. That's hard, because this is the best my work has been, but I'm still getting rejected. I've been competitive my whole life with horse shows, so I've learned to take it. I got some feedback and ultimately it was like, 'You're almost there.' I'm getting closer and closer. It's like horse showing — you're never going to get good if you don't enter the pen and take a constant beating for a while. You go in, come out and fix things, and keep learning little things." 🐾



Top: In the end, horses and art will always connect for Ali.  
Right: Ali Anderson and a selection of her art.





# Splint Bone Injuries in Horses

By Garrett Metcalf, DVM

Splint bone issues in horses are a common problem across various ages and disciplines. These injuries can be caused by excessive work in young horses or by traumatic injuries. The splint bones play an important role in the stability of the joints they help form at the knee or hock level. This article will discuss the different types of splint bone injuries and their treatments.

The splint bones are small bones that are intimately attached to the inside and outside of the cannon bone. To understand which section is injured, it's helpful to break the splint bone down into three parts: the head, the mid-body section, and the button. The head of the splint bones forms part of the carpus (knee) in the forelimb and part of the hock in the hindlimb.

Research has demonstrated the important role splint bones play in the stability of these joints. A study conducted at Colorado State College of Veterinary Medicine noted that when larger portions of the splint bone were removed, rotational stability in the carpus was significantly impacted, and other directional forces were also affected.

Diagnosing splint bone injuries is generally straightforward with radiographs, though in some cases, ultrasound can also be helpful. Bone or callus formation around these splint bone injuries can compress the suspensory ligament, leading to chronic pain and lameness issues.

## Popped Splints

“Popped splints” refer to injuries that generally occur in younger horses entering training and work. These injuries typically affect the inside forelimb splints and can be quite painful, leading to loss of training time. A popped



When two horses don't get along and kick at each other, the lateral splint bone is often the one that gets broken. (Courtesy photo)

splint is the result of tearing the ligament that holds the splint bone to the cannon bone, known as the interosseous ligament. When the ligament is torn, bleeding can occur, disrupting the periosteum of the bones and causing a callus or firm bony lump.

The inside splint on the forelimb is more prone to injury because it bears direct load with the second carpal bone at the head of the splint bone. This places direct force on the splint bone, while other splint bones share the load with adjacent carpal or hock bones.

Popped splints are often painful, with noticeable swelling near the splint bone and heat present. When palpated, a moderate amount of pain will be elicited.

Treatment for popped splints typically includes rest, systemic anti-inflammatory drugs, and local anti-inflammatory treatments. Acute inflammation can be soothed with ice, cold therapies, and bandaging. Alternative therapies such as cold laser therapy, MagnaWave, or shockwave therapy can also be incorporated into the treatment plan. In more extreme cases, surgical removal of the bone callus may be necessary to prevent compression of the suspensory ligament.

## Splint Bone Fractures

Splint bone fractures can occur at any level of the splint bone, but some areas are more commonly fractured. The distal one-third of the splint bone is most often

fractured in the forelimbs. These fractures are occasionally associated with forelimb suspensory ligament issues. The suspensory ligament has a small attachment to the button of the splint bone, and when the lower limb is heavily extended, bending forces on the lower part of the splint bones can lead to fractures.

In the hind limb, the outside (lateral) splint bone is the most commonly fractured. These fractures often result from kicking injuries.

When two horses don't get along and kick at each other, the lateral splint bone is often the one that gets broken. These injuries are particularly problematic due to the open wounds that are heavily contaminated with manure,

hair, and dirt, as well as injuries to flexor tendons.

Fractures near the head of the splint are especially problematic and can sometimes be career-ending or life-threatening. These fractures can involve the joints of the carpus or hock, leading to septic arthritis, severe lameness, and possibly serious instability of the corresponding joint. The rule of thumb for equine veterinarians when surgically removing damaged or fractured splint bones is the “two-thirds, one-third rule.” This means the lower two-thirds of the splint bone can be safely removed, but the upper one-third should be preserved whenever possible. Complete removal of the upper one-third of the splint bone can lead to chronic lameness or, worse, catastrophic joint dislocation when the horse attempts to rise from anesthesia. In some cases, the fractured upper one-third of the splint can be repaired

using plates and screws to maintain stability in the joint.

Smaller traumatic injuries to the splint bone often occur from interference injuries or when the horse’s own feet hit the inner splint bones during work. These injuries can be prevented with the use of splint boots on the lower limbs during exercise. Some lower limb boots provide support to the fetlock and suspensory ligament, which can help prevent distal splint bone fractures, although they are not always fully protective.

Some splint bone injuries are relatively simple and common issues that many horse owners can address. However, more serious traumatic fractures and wounds related to splint injuries should be examined by a veterinarian. If you suspect a splint bone injury, it’s best to consult a professional to ensure proper treatment and prevent further complications. 🐾

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**November 8th**

**9 a.m. - 1 p.m.**



# Rookie Road: Learning as you Go

By Krista Lucas Wynn | Copy Editor



The author competing at Cheyenne Frontier Days for the first time. (Photo by Laura Wright Story, provided by Krista Lucas Wynn)

The Cheyenne Frontier Days is a bucket list rodeo for any cowboy or cowgirl to compete at. I was fortunate enough to get to enter the 2025 CFD in the barrel racing. Competing at the Daddy of 'Em All as a rookie was an experience I will always remember, and I hope there will be many more opportunities like it to come.

The CFD was held July 18-27, with slack rounds held the week

prior. We left from North Texas on Monday, July 14, en route to compete Wednesday morning in the barrel racing slack. There were over 200 entries, with the top 72 advancing to the quarter-final rounds in the performances. It takes a lot of preparation to travel 16 hours away from home, with a horse and four people.

We drove about 10 hours the first day to Quinter, Kansas where

we stayed for the night before driving the rest of the way on Tuesday. We took portable panels with us to make a pen where we were staying, but funny enough our place for the night had a dog park next to it, and we were able to turn my horse out in a nice, grassy dog pen. Now, that will be something I'm sure my horse and I will both always remember.

We left out the next morning

for about six more hours of driving. Traveling with a horse takes a little longer when you have to stop to let one walk around and drink water. We arrived in Cheyenne, WY mid-afternoon, and arriving at Frontier Park as a contestant for the first time is something I will never forget.

Everything, from parking to getting a stall on site, went so smoothly. As a rookie, you don't



know what to expect, and I was very thankful I had my parents and husband there to help navigate.

My uncle, Luke Lucas, competed in the bull riding in 1979, and we had been to the CFD to watch in 2011 and 2012, but there is nothing like arriving at frontier park with your name on the list of contestants and receiving that iconic back number.

Although we did not have the run we needed to advance, we learned a lot about what it takes to care for a horse on the road and to compete in a unique set up that you or your horse haven't experienced before.

Several rookies in each event advanced all the way to championship Sunday. Bareback rider, Quinton Lunsford, calf roper Jarvis Demery, breakaway roper Hannah Giger, and multiple bull riders were rookies that beat out some of the top veterans of rodeo

to make it into the top 12. Rookie, Yynn Andersen, even won the coveted bull riding title.

Lisa Lockhart, 18 time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo qualifier, won the 2025 CFD barrel racing title, and it was pretty cool to have the opportunity to watch her run her standout mare, Rosa, in the qualifying round. It is always exciting to get the chance to compete alongside your idols.

As a rookie, it is important to remember that you are not the only one that may not know where to go or what to do. If you don't know, don't be afraid to ask, and that can be applied in anything you do in life.

Just like everything, the rookie year goes by fast. Cowboys and cowgirls only get one rookie year, so make the most of it and enjoy every moment, especially if you get the chance to compete at places like the Daddy of 'Em All. 🐾

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# Letters

## *The Connection we can Hold*

By JoAnne Moore

Last year I fell upon a genius idea turned into a business - the lost art of letter writing. There are several companies that have resurrected letter writing via woven stories of various historical periods.

Each company sells a six or twelve-month subscription to a curious reader who is willing to shell out an amount of money to be taken on a journey through a fictional set of characters and historically based circumstances via printed letters that look handwritten.

Each month a letter comes in an envelope that may include what could be called artifacts - faux telegrams, newspaper articles, or whatever else that can be printed and marketed to swiftly move the story along while, hopefully, providing the subscriber with the feeling that their money was well spent and the story and experience are satisfying.

I'll offer that I found the design to be the most compelling while the story I followed had its high and low points set in World War II, but the real gift was a surprising one. My long lost love of letters had returned!

As a young schoolgirl, I enthusiastically pursued a handful of pen pals through my elementary school when pen pals were all the rage, but the letters fizzled out and the connections didn't last. One summer, I spotted a photo of a young girl on my Grandma Edna's mantel about my age I was already plotting my next pen pal when I inquired just who she was! The little girl's name was Jackie, and she was my grandma's niece, my second cousin, who lived in Joplin, Missouri where my dad



was born and raised. I'd never met her nor had I ever been to Missouri, but my dad's stories about "back home" gave birth to a fascination in my heart with the people and places that made him who he was. I begged for Jackie's address, wrote her an introduction letter in my ten-year-old handwriting and was absolutely thrilled when eleven-year-old Jackie answered enthusiastically. So began a writing relationship that lasted thirteen years before we finally met face-to-face. Years of writing and preserving our moments in time, sharing our secrets, wove our hearts together forever.

Letters between Jackie and I weren't ordinary or mundane communication--they were rituals of love, preservations of memories and deep connection. Today in the digital age, one where emails and texts or even phone calls have be-

come the quicker, easier and preferred method of communication, a handwritten thank you note, or a personal letter, is dying practice.

A tactile letter, weighted with emotion, evidence of time poured out onto the page in the ink, slows us down, makes us feel important, proof that someone took the time to gather their writing tools, and began a personal narrative to us, story telling at its best if given the opportunity.

I have a small duffle bag in a closet, gifted to me by Grandma Edna who witnessed my enchantment with letters, that holds letters written from Germany in the late 1950's by my Dad, Johnny, who was a Sergeant First Class in the Army tanker division - letters he wrote home to his people from his base at night after a long day of maneuvers before lights out, always opening with "Dear Mother

and Daddy."

Letters can be revisited. They can be part of a legacy. His Mother and Daddy are gone now, as is my dad, but I have the gift of his skillful storytelling spilled out in his beautiful handwriting, and I can hear his heavy Missouri accent in my heart when I read them as if he is there in the room. A text or email is vacant in comparison.

There's something quietly powerful about holding a letter in your hands - knowing that someone paused their day, chose their words carefully, and sent a piece of themselves across time and distance. In an age of instant messages and disappearing texts, I found myself longing for something slower, something more intentional.

So, I returned to the page. Not just for nostalgia, but for connection. I began writing letters - real



ones - guided by prayer and a sense that maybe, just maybe, this old practice still had something sacred to offer.

Each envelope I sealed felt like a small act of love, a whisper of care, a breadcrumb of grace left for someone to find. And what I discovered along the way was that letter writing isn't just a lost art - it's a lifeline. A way to remind each other that we matter, that we're remembered, and that words written with intention can still change hearts.

The notes explain the year's commitment, how their name dropped into my heart's mission, and what and how I might be praying for them, not fully aware of how they might need prayer but trusting that we all do at the end of the day.

The responses from recipients have been life-changing. Sometimes the response comes across the digital highway, and some-

times there is a letter or thank-you card in my own mailbox, weeks or even months later. Letters are vessels of vulnerability, confessions of loneliness or depression, grief, joy, celebration, longing, forgiveness, and gratitude. The messages of gratitude all continue to echo a beautiful outcome and how the recipient needed prayer at just the right time.

Like breadcrumbs scattered along a country path, they have led both sender and receiver toward something deeper - toward moments of divine timing, where the recipient needed prayer for something personal, painful, and private, often without having voiced it to anyone else out loud. Each letter was a quiet miracle. A breadcrumb of love, laid down in faith, found by someone who needed it most. And for me, the sender, the reward has been profound: a renewed sense of purpose, a quiet joy in knowing that a simple act of

writing could become a lifeline, a light, a re-minder that love - when offered freely - always finds its way back.

Letters are time capsules; a fingerprint of the soul pressed into paper. It's a bridge between hearts, spanning miles and maybe even years if they are treasured.

Perhaps the revival of letter writing isn't just nostalgia - it's resistance. A quiet rebellion against the hurried, the disposable, the impersonal. In a world that often feels fragmented and fast, the act of sitting down to write a letter becomes a sacred pause, a deliberate offering of time and presence.

What if we all chose to slow down just enough to write one letter a month? Not for the sake of productivity or performance, but for connection - for the joy of crafting words that linger, for the healing that comes from being seen and heard across distance. What if we taught our children

the beauty of handwritten notes, passed stories between generations, and built archives of love and memory in ink?

Letters are more than communication; they are communion. They remind us that we are not alone, that someone thought of us long enough to write, fold, stamp, and send. They are proof that care can be tangible, that words can be gifts, and that time can be shared.

So let us write. Let us return to the page. Let us become storytellers again - not just of our own lives, but of the lives we touch with every envelope sealed and every message sent. Send questions, send compliments, send moments that brightened your day explaining how you wanted to share them because the human on the receiving end matters, is missed, is thought of.

The mailbox may be old-fashioned, but the heart it reaches is timeless. 📧





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# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

## Just Keep Trying

I promise you, this is not going to be a morbid conversation. But, on the “keeping it real” side of things, I couldn’t help but consider how our old pear tree reflects how I’ve been feeling about myself lately.

Have you ever struggled with the thought that maybe you’ve reached an age where you’ve lived most of your life?

My husband says our old pear tree is probably around our age. His mom planted it, along with most of the other trees on our cattle ranch, back in 1962. That would make the oldest tree on our ranch about sixty-two years old - younger than us! This pear tree is likely one of the oldest still standing.

When my husband and I first married, we had a variety of fruit trees, including plum, peach, apple, and pear. Most of those are gone now. Some were uprooted by Texas storms, and others simply reached the end of their life expectancy.

Curious about the typical lifespan of the fruit trees we’ve grown, I did a little googling. I found that plum trees typically last ten to fifteen years. Peach trees are similar but can live twenty to thirty years. Apple trees, if the conditions are right, can live thirty to forty years. Wild pear trees can last upwards of fifty years, and there are even varieties of pear trees that have lived for hundreds of years.

This old pear tree is one of the last trees planted by my dear mother-in-law. After I snapped

this photo, I thought to myself: although it looks more dead than alive, it is still bearing fruit. And that thought, my friends, got this city girl-turned-country to thinking about her own life in a profound way.

Even though I may have fewer years ahead of me than I did when I first started out in this world, that doesn’t mean I can’t still live as fully and purposefully as I did in my youth.

Doing my best might look different today, but doing my best is good enough. I’m the only one keeping track and deciding what my best is anyway!

Part of doing my best these days includes taking a morning walk that takes me by this old pear tree. Every time I pass by, I hear the old tree singing, “This is me trying!”

That tune has become my mantra. There are many things that are more difficult for me to accomplish than they once were, but I haven’t given up on trying to do them. I don’t want to give up. It’s just not in me. I suspect I inherited some of my mama’s determination, strength, and stubbornness.

What “trying” looks like for each of us will probably be different at every season of our lives.

For me, “trying” these days includes things like maintaining a healthy diet, exercising or moving my body every day, keeping my brain active by learning a new skill or exploring a topic I’ve never delved into, trying to keep a positive attitude (listening to my



(Photo courtesy of Annette Bridges)

favorite songs and spending time being creative helps with that), doing something each day that makes me feel productive - even if it’s just making the bed - and making travel plans, especially

trips to spend precious time with dear friends and family.

The list of things we try to do truly has no limits, and whatever we try to do is good enough as long as we keep trying. 

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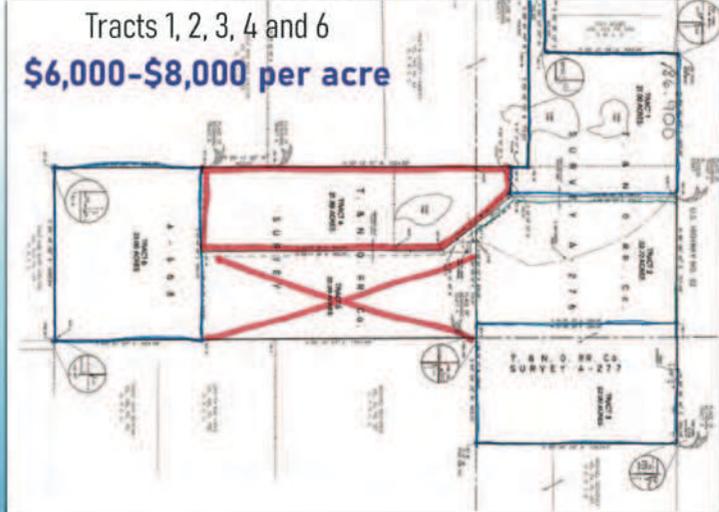
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# You Have to Plant the Seed Before it can Grow

By Dal Houston

When we moved out into the country 18 years ago, the area around our house did not have one single tree around it; it was nothing but a wheat field. The wind and the dirt, from miles around, hit the house with nothing to break it, and I sometimes wondered if the house would blow away. The inside of the house required a thorough dusting every day. And my Mother-in-law hated me for moving her daughter into such a home. LOL

Trees do more than just provide a break from the wind; they provide privacy. I remember people driving by and being able to see our every move, whether we were sitting on the front porch or at the dining room table, watching TV, or if the kids were playing in the yard. We felt that we were on full display for the whole world.

So, shortly after moving there, I started planting and transplanting trees to break the wind and to give us some privacy. At the time, the trees were so small, and my actions seemed so insignificant. I figured we would be old and dead before those tiny trees could ever grow to a size sufficient to serve their purpose.

Recently, I was sitting on our front porch enjoying drinking coffee and watching the horses and cows graze. During one such morning, as I was sitting on the porch, I heard the distant sound of a vehicle approaching. I looked to see who it was and realized I could no longer see the vehicles driving down the road. More importantly, I realized the drivers could no longer see me on the front porch!

I had been so distracted by the day-to-day grind of life that I hadn't even noticed how much



(Courtesy photo)

the trees had grown. We now have the privacy that we had craved and that at one time seemed too far in the distance. It suddenly dawned on me that I hadn't felt the house shake in the wind for a long time.

So here's the point—glaringly obvious as it may be—that I want you to take from this: Had I never planted the trees, they never would have grown.

My act of nurturing those tiny trees around our house all those years ago is the only way I was

able to have that revelation on my porch. Perhaps if I hadn't, the wind would have blown the house down by now.

I remember a legal client chatting with me about whether or not it was a good time to sow his wheat. He said, "One thing is certain—it won't grow unless it is in the ground."

Now, this article isn't really about trees or wheat. It's about planting the proverbial seed of something we want in the future.

If we don't, it is a certainty that, unless by some act of God, the dream, hope, or aspiration will never come to be.

Whether you want to change your career, get in shape, or start a new business, remember that it may take a while, but the first step is to plant the seed.

For more content:  
Instagram: @Dal Houston  
YouTube: @theeccentriccowboy,  
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[www.dalhouston.com](http://www.dalhouston.com)



# Harold & His Armadillo

By Alec Haigood



(Courtesy photo)

I've written several articles about a man named Harold. A few people have asked me, "Who is Harold?" or "Is Harold a real person?"

The answer is yes, Harold is a good friend of mine, and yes, he's a real person. You just can't make these stories up. Harold writes them for you.

It takes me back to when Harold built his new house across the river in Oklahoma and put in a new sodded yard. He fertil-

ized, watered, and got everything going well until the armadillo showed up.

Every morning, he'd step out on the front porch and see the damage from the night before. He'd rant, rave, and set traps, but that armadillo always outsmarted him.

So, after a few weeks, Harold had a new plan. He decided to set an alarm and sneak around the house to catch the armadillo red-handed and deal with it. It seemed

like a good plan, right? But here's where it gets good: Harold came home one day from the sale barn and parked his truck and cattle trailer just outside the pipe fence in front of the house.

That very night, he peeked out the window and saw the armadillo at work. Instead of sneaking out the back door like he planned, he just opened the front door and walked out onto the porch. The armadillo took off running, and Harold fired a shot from his shot-

gun right into the back tire of his cattle trailer.

You can't make this stuff up. I'm sure Harold eventually got the armadillo, but it cost him a new tire for his trailer. He claims he'd just put new tires on it, but knowing Harold like I do, that tire was probably 20 years old and ready to be replaced anyway.

Just another true story about my good friend. I'll wait a bit and see what Harold helps me write next. 🍷

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# Gray Hair and Eternal Truths

By Brandon Baumgarten



(Courtesy photo)

I always knew the day would come, just not so soon...

Last night, after we got home from church, my wife looked at my head and said, “Something looks different about you.” She leaned forward, then looked closer. “Look at that!”

“Uh, what?” I replied.

She then proceeded to pull one singular hair out of my scalp and said, “You have a gray hair!” Ouch, and ouch.

No one knows where it came

from. Raising girls? Youth ministry? Stress? Traveling? Public speaking? Oklahoma road construction? No Bucees in Oklahoma yet? Who knows. But at 33, I didn’t expect a gray hair just yet.

When she showed me the gray hair, I said, “I always knew it was coming, just not so soon.”

That statement has echoed in my head all day. Gray hair is going to come. Old age is going to come. Eternity is also going to come. And when I think of people

like Ozzie, Malcolm, and Hulk, I bet they also had gray hair. But perhaps they might have said of their deaths a similar line, “I always knew it was coming, just not so soon.”

None of us know when our hair will turn gray, nor do we know when our time on earth will expire. But looking closer, I think they all had something else in common.

We may never be a famous singer, a beloved actor, or a wrestling icon, but someday we will all

stand before God.

No matter how many fans or finances we have, we are all guaranteed eternity.

Where we spend it, though, is up to our decision. We will spend forever somewhere based on the decision we make here on earth: to accept Jesus as Lord or to reject Him.

We cannot control nor can we alter the beliefs of the deceased, but we can emphasize our own personal decision to follow Jesus

Christ. Tonight, I invite you to take a closer look—not at your scalp, but at your heart. Put your faith in Jesus and choose Him as your Lord.

I pray that when I die, my life speaks more about my relationship with Jesus than anything else. I'm not perfect, and I'm on my own crazy train called the Constant Struggle Bus.

Maybe you're on that bus with me too. Sometimes life gets gray, so let me share this truth in black and white. But no matter where you're at, here's what I can't guarantee:

I can't guarantee success as a famous musician

I can't guarantee fame as a brilliant actor

I can't guarantee the thrill of being an acclaimed wrestler in a WWE arena

I can't guarantee tomorrow  
...but I CAN guarantee time goes by fast!

I can guarantee (as of yesterday) that hair grows gray.

I can guarantee that there's more to life than we realize.

I can guarantee that Jesus is inviting you to a brand new life.

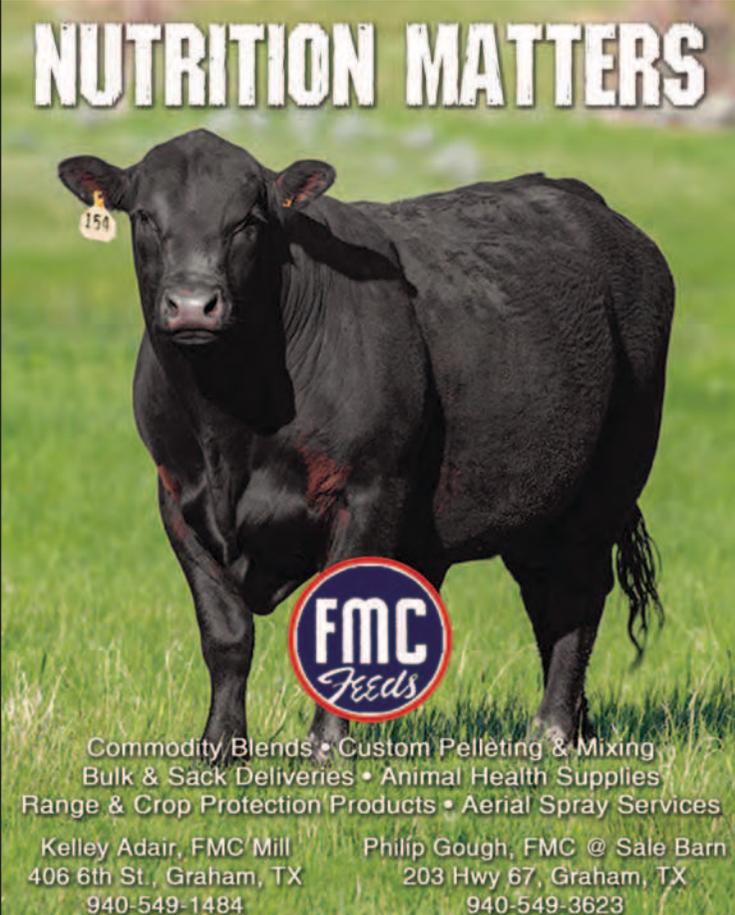
I can guarantee that the eternity of Heaven or Hell will be our forever home.

When eternity comes knocking on our door, I pray our hearts have chosen Jesus. And when we arrive in Heaven, perhaps we'll look back and say, "I always knew it was coming, and praise God, I'm home!"

And in that place, there will be no more sickness, death, sorrow, or pain. Just us and Jesus, along with hair that will never again turn gray.

*"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* — Revelation 21:4 (NIV) 

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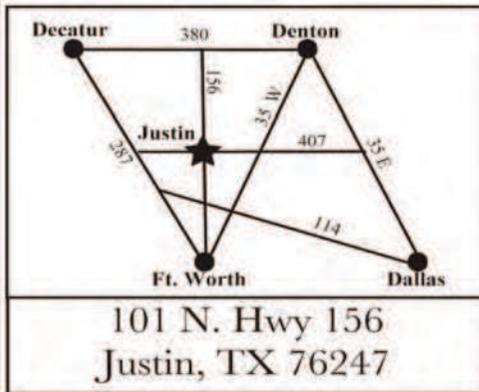
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# On the Road WITH DAVE ALEXANDER



## You Find Out Who Your Friends Are

George Strait recently hosted a “Strait to the Heart” benefit concert and dinner in Boerne, Texas, to raise money for Texas flood relief. The event, which included performances by Strait and other country artists, raised over \$6 million for families affected by the recent devastating floods.

A private dinner and concert for 1,000 guests was held on July 27 and featured Strait, members of his Ace in the Hole Band, and special guests including William Beckmann, Ray Benson, Wade Bowen, Garth Brooks, and Governor Greg Abbott.

The “Strait to the Heart” event was organized in response to the catastrophic floods in Texas’ Hill Country.

“With this support, homes will be rebuilt, communities restored, and peace will return,” explained Governor Abbot, “Texas will recover by God’s grace and our grit”.

Donations are still being accepted and will be distributed through the Vaqueros del Mar Texas Flood Relief Fund.

Many Texans talk about “Texas Strong,” while some step up and do it.

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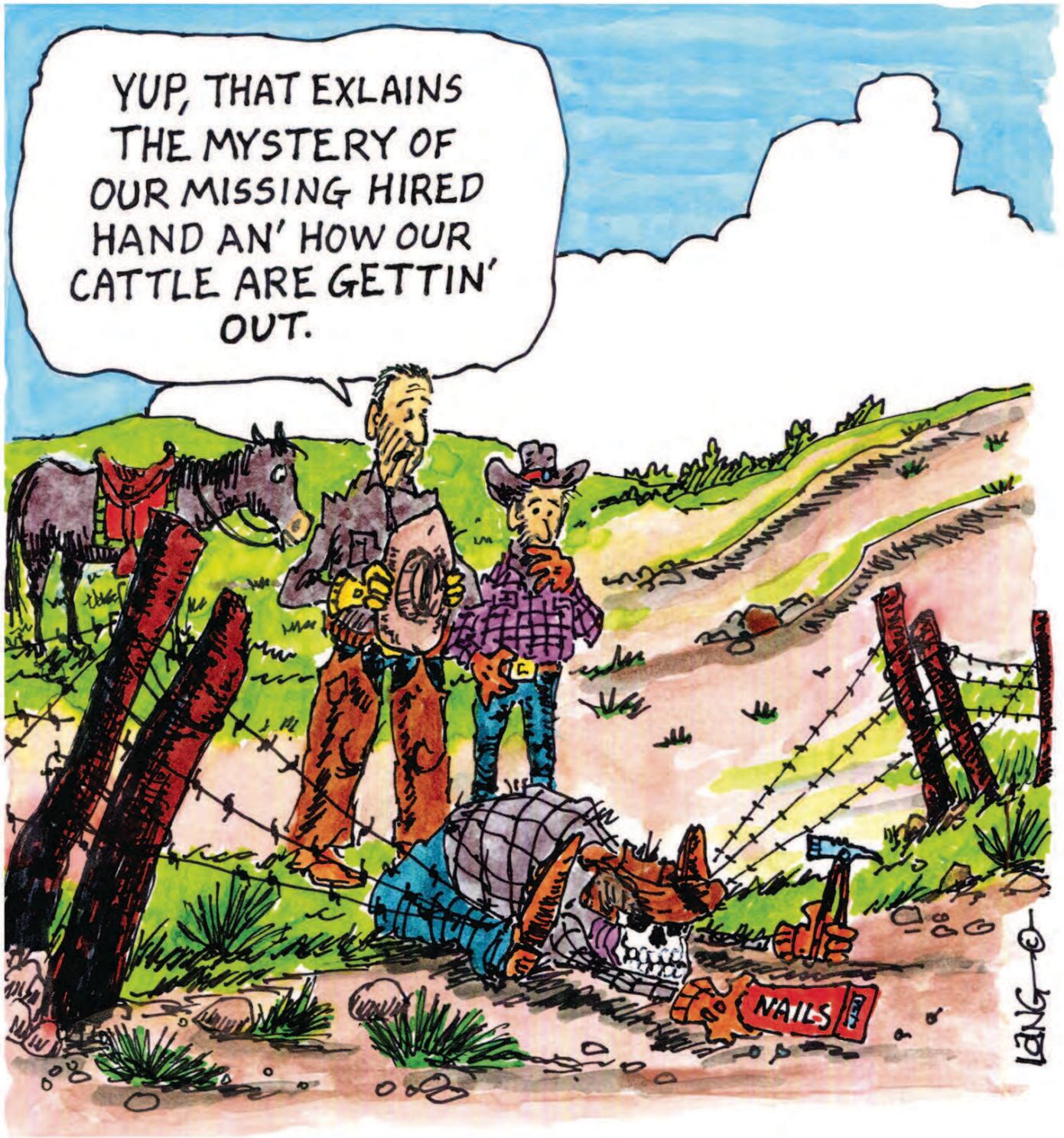
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OUT.



# American Statesman Henry Clay

By Judy Wade



Left: The Clay County Courthouse. Right: American Statesman Henry Clay. (Courtesy photos)

Henry Clay was an American statesman, loved by many because of his personal magnetism and detested by others because of his elaborate scheming.

Clay was born April 12, 1777, in Hanover, Va., the seventh of nine children. He studied law and became a successful lawyer. Leader of the Whig party and five times an unsuccessful presidential candidate, he played a major role in national politics for more than 40 years.

He served as Secretary of State, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senator.

Clay opposed slavery and defended the rights of the Five Civilized Tribes. Clay passed away in 1852.

Clay opposed the annexation of Texas and never set foot in the

state, but, ironically, had a county named for him.

Clay County came into being when Cooke County was divided. First organized in 1861, it was largely abandoned because Federal troops were withdrawn during the Civil War and Indian raids made living there too dangerous.

The county was reorganized in 1873 with Cambridge as the county seat.

In 1882, with the arrival of a railroad and a bitter battle, Henrietta became the county seat.

The origin of the name Henrietta is unknown. Some say it is the feminine version of Henry, but others attribute it to other beginnings.

Today, Clay County ranks 164th in population among the 254 counties in the state with a

population of 10,456 and 50th in size with 1,116 square miles. It borders Red River on the north.

The economy is largely agricultural with many large ranches and farms. Crops are mainly wheat and some cotton.

The courthouse on the square in the center of town is the focus of many events through-out the year.

Built in 1884 of brick and sandstone in the Italianate style, it has undergone several renovations over the years.

The original clock tower has been replaced by a dome, and the fire escape from the second story to the ground, which provided a playground for children, has been removed for safety reasons.

An annex has been built across the street to alleviate crowding in the courthouse offices.

Major events in the county are the Clay County Pioneer Reunion and Rodeo, which features three parades of colorful floats and hundreds of horseback riders, Christmas Parade on the Square, Turkey Fest, Junior Livestock Show, car shows, Hwy 82 Garage Sales and Community Easter Egg Hunt.

Several event venues are available. Many historic buildings and home reflect the heritage of the community. The 1890 Clay County Jail Museum offers a look into the past with numerous exhibits including a farm machinery museum. 524 acre Lake Arrowhead provides swimming, boating, water skiing, fishing, camping, hiking and other activities.

It's too bad Henry Clay never had the opportunity to visit the place named for him. 

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# The Raccoon Rebellion

By Ann Asher

If you've ever looked into the eyes of a raccoon mid-heist, you know two things:

1. They feel no remorse.
2. They're probably winning.

I've been dealing with a raccoon problem in my barn for a while now. It started with the usual signs - feed bags torn open, tubs tipped over, paw prints on the feed room shelves. I set out traps, caught a few, and thought I was handling the situation. I had even convinced myself I was doing it the humane way, relocating the little troublemakers and moving on with life.

Turns out, the raccoons were just being dropped off a few miles away from the barn. Not far enough to be gone for good, but apparently just far enough to come back with an attitude. I'm pretty sure they spent that walk home making a list of everything they planned to de-destroy. Once they returned, they kicked things up a notch. Feed bags were shredded beyond repair. The tub of cat food disappeared from the barn and was found half-empty out in the pasture. That tub has a screw-on lid I sometimes struggle to open. The raccoons figured it out in no time.

After that, it became clear that we were in a full-on battle. The cat food now gets tied up in the air, the same way campers hang food to keep it away from bears. It's ridiculous, but it works. We also found an old chest freezer to store the horse feed. It's not plugged in, but it's heavy and secure. For now, it's holding the line.

We've had a few peaceful nights since making those changes. No new holes in the feed bags, no tubs dragged out of the barn. Just some muddy footprints here and there to remind me they're still watching.



(Courtesy photo)

There's probably a lesson in all this. Maybe it's about persistence. The raccoons are determined, but so am I. They adapt. I adapt. It's an ongoing standoff, and nobody's quitting. Or maybe it's about prep-

aration. When you live out in the country, you learn pretty quickly that you can't rely on things going smoothly for long. Something always shows up to knock you off track. A raccoon. A storm. A sick

horse. But if you stay alert and keep adjusting, you'll get by.

Sometimes, you don't win by outsmarting the problem. You win by being just stubborn enough to keep trying. 🐾

# Don't Forget Fall Cleanup In the Garden

By Trisha Gedon | OSU Sr. Communications Specialist



Cleaning up the garden in the fall gives gardeners a head-start in the spring. (Courtesy photos)

With the arrival of colder weather, gardeners should spend some time tidying up their garden spaces in the offseason.

What stays in the garden and what goes? Casey Hentges, Oklahoma State University Extension specialist and host of OSU Agriculture's "Oklahoma Gardening" television show, said most annuals and tropical plants should be pulled up from the garden.

"Vegetable plants such as tomatoes and peppers can be removed, roots and all," Hentges said. "When removing the plants, try to leave as much soil as possible. If gardeners didn't experience any pest or disease problems, this plant material can be added to a compost pile. Nice, rich compost will be a great addition to your garden next spring."

However, if pest and/or dis-

ease issues occurred, those plants should be removed and thrown away. They are not good candidates for the compost pile because that gives the pests a place to overwinter and become a problem again next year.

Laura Payne, OSU Extension horticulture educator in Payne County, said gardeners should consider leaving some plant material to serve as habitat for benefi-

cial insects during the cold, winter months.

"If gardeners remove everything from the garden, that takes away shelter and a place to overwinter for many beneficial insects," Payne said. "Leave some plants in the garden for shelter and those can then be cleaned up in the spring. A good rule of thumb is to remove annuals, but leave perennials unless they are



diseased, dead or damaged from insect infestation.”

If the garden contains plants that reseed, leave them in place to start over in the spring if desired.

“If it’s more of a weed or nuisance plant, pull it out carefully and bag it, so the seeds don’t get distributed,” Payne said. “Throw these plant materials in the trash. Gardeners don’t want to put them in the compost pile.”

### Trees and Shrubs

In addition to cleaning up plant material, some may want to prune trees and shrubs. While pruning can be done any time of the year, different plants have recommended pruning times, Payne said.

“Pruning should be done when it results in the least damage to the plant. Continual improper pruning results in damaged or weakened plants,” she said. “The best time to prune plants is during late winter or early spring before growth begins. However, deciduous trees can be pruned now. The least desirable time is immediately after new growth develops in the spring.”

### Grasses and Leaves

Ornamental grasses are popular plants in the landscape, but what should gardeners do with them in the winter?

Hentges said both annual and perennial grasses should be left in the garden for now.

“Annual ornamental grasses can be removed, or if a gardener chooses, can remain until late winter and then be dug up and removed,” she said. “Leave perennial grasses in place and plan to trim them back in late winter just before new growth emerges. The great thing about ornamental grasses is gardeners get a fourth season out of them due to the visual interest and movement they provide in a winter landscape.”

Perennial grasses like monkey grass should remain in place and then mowed in the spring to prepare for new growth.

Hentges also suggests raking leaves from cool-season lawns, such as fescue; the grass is still actively growing, and removing the leaves helps ensure the grass receives as much sunlight as possible over the winter.

Payne said the fall season is a good time to do a soil test. Learning what the soil may lack now gives gardeners plenty of time to prepare for spring planting by amending the soil with organic material.

Gardeners can layer about an inch of compost on top of the soil. A thin layer of leaves also works, but be careful not to pile them too



high. A thick layer of leaves can impede rainfall from reaching the soil.

### General Gardening Maintenance

Disconnect the water hose from the spigot and drain the hose. Store it in the garage or garden shed. Keep in mind that evergreen plants will need to be watered periodically.

Clean and sharpen garden tools.

Gas-powered garden tools should run until they’re out of fuel. If fuel remains in the tank, add a stabilizer.

Remove soil from planters.

If it is a wet winter, the soil can freeze, expand and possibly crack the planter.

Planters containing hardy plants that will remain outside can be wrapped in bubble wrap to add a layer of insulation to help protect the roots of the plant.

Cover water gardens with netting to help keep out debris throughout the winter.

Seal cracks in doors and windows in the home to prevent insects from coming inside.

OSU Extension offers additional gardening information at <https://extension.okstate.edu/topics/plants-and-animals/gardening-and-lawn-care/> 

# Hunting is a Sport Not Sport Hunting

By Andy Anderson

I walk into a local café, the small-town type of café where the tables don't match, the history of the area covers the walls from floor to ceiling and the smells of fresh hot coffee and home-style cooking fills the air. The old-timers of the area are gathered at a table in the back of the dining room talking and sharing stories, giving free advice to solving any problem you may have or a salty opinion should you ask for one.

As I find a table, and slide the chair back to have a seat, the waitress sets a coffee cup down and fills it to the brim. Time seems to slow down; peace sets in as I look over the menu even though I already know what I'm going to have. Not too much attention is paid to my presence by the table of patriarchs seated behind me. They glance over at me and carry on with their conversation. Guess I fit the part.

About that time a couple of young men, about 16 years of age, burst into the café. Loud and abrupt as they enter, they just stand in the doorway for a few moments. The waitress advises they can sit anywhere they like. A quick glance at the hair on their faces, skinny jeans and tennis shoes, it's obvious they are not from around here. About that time, a low grumble sounds from the table behind me, "Y'all can sit up front there." The young men sit at the table next to the door minding the advice given.

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



(Courtesy photo)

As we discuss helicopter hog hunting, the young men decide they should advise us that shooting pigs from a helicopter is not hunting, it's murder. Well, use your imagination as to the response returned their way and about how much anyone cared about their opinion. The young men got the point and soon departed the café.

The conversation turned to one of the differences in hunting the "old way" and this "new way" of hunting. Helicopter hunting is a depredation program with the goal being to reduce the population of an invasive species.

However, helicopter hog hunting was not the topic of conversation, but how much hunting has changed over the years. I sat for over an hour listening to various stories of how each man learned

to stalk their prey, navigate without maps, and, most importantly, the honor with which each man expressed learning the traditional ways of hunting and fishing and that the old ways are what defined them as men.

There was a sense of pride and boastfulness as they described their first kills and their failures. Included in each story was a fatherly figure, someone who took the time to teach them the basics. I, too, was taught this way and am sharing it with my son as he grows.

I asked from time to time their opinions about the use of technology in hunting: GPS, phones, scopes and range finders. A few said we have all become too dependent on technology. It has made us weak. The others said if they knew how to use it, they

would and didn't have a problem with it.

One thing remained the same, though. Despite the use of technology, skinny jeans or new scopes, the respect of the hunt and of the game remained. Except for pigs; pigs are not included in this at all. In fact, don't ever bring up saving pigs to ranchers or farmers unless you want a word lashing or worse.

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

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



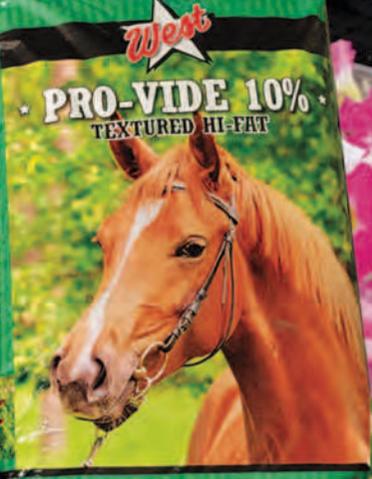
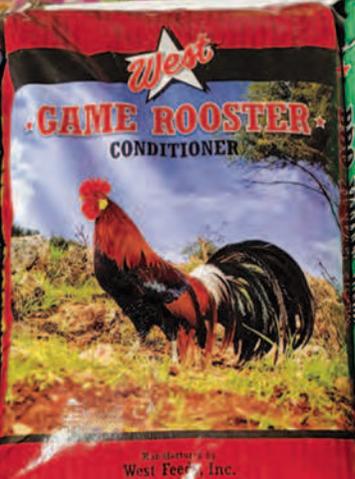
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# The GARDEN GUY

## Muhly Grasses Offer Dazzling Fall Display

By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker

Muhly grasses native to the southern United States offer dazzling performances for the fall landscape. One of the most picturesque is commonly called Lindheimer’s muhly, or blue muhly.

The blue-gray-green color and fine leaf texture would make this grass a winner even if it never bloomed. But it does, sending up plumes on 4-foot-tall plants. The blossoms begin as a creamy pink that turns whiter and finishes tan.

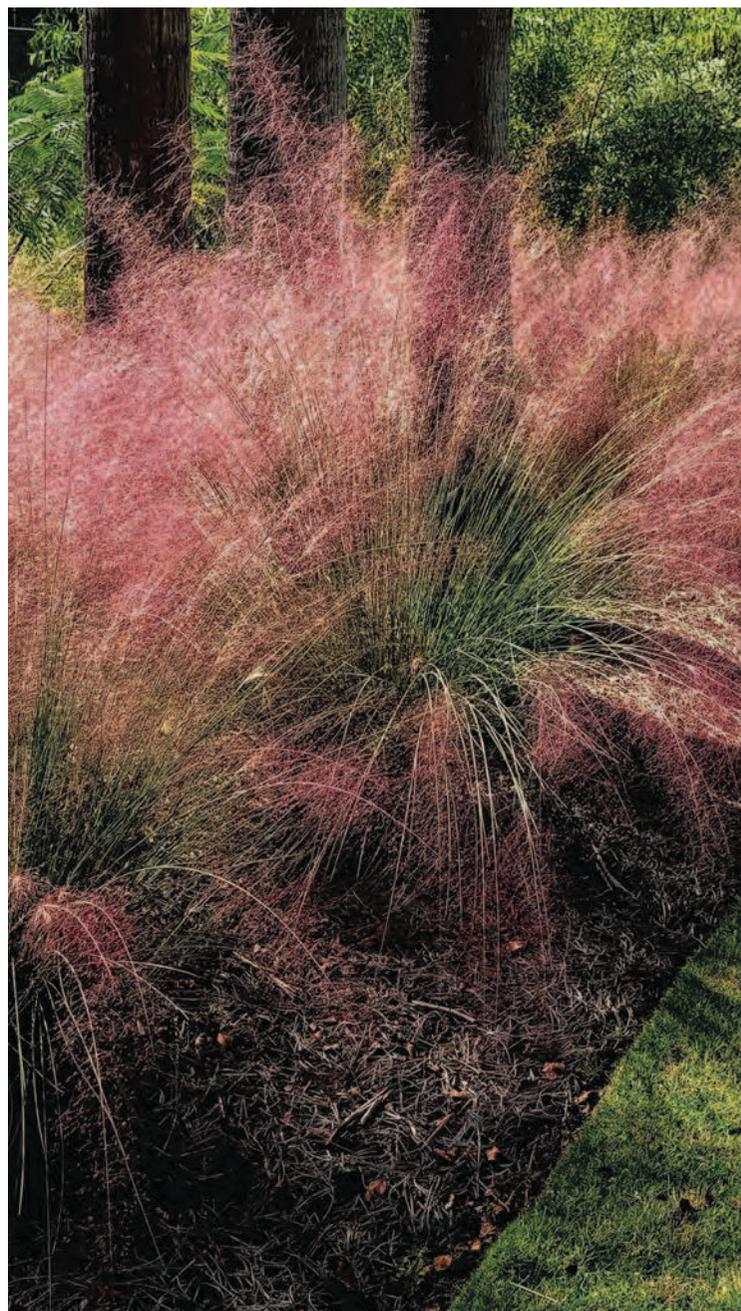
No matter where you go in the country, it seems gardeners want more drought-tolerant plants; the Lindheimer’s muhly certainly falls in this category. It is generally considered cold hardy from zone 6-10. In my trials with Mississippi State University, we partnered it with Knock Out roses and Kathy Ann Brown Mexican bush sage. This makes quite a fall display.

Another terrific muhly choice is the Gulf Coast muhly, or pink muhly, known botanically as *Muhlenbergia capillaris*. This grass absolutely mesmerizes those who see its cotton candy-like blooms. A white variety called White Cloud looks like cumulus clouds 4 feet off the ground. Like the Lindheimer’s muhly, it too is cold hardy to zone 6.

Both pink and white muhly grasses reach about 4 feet tall and look at home in any kind of garden. Grow them in beds with deep pink or red shrub roses. Place them in front of other grasses, such as purple fountain or black bamboo. Muhly grass looks great



Lindheimer’s Muhly grass looks ever so picturesque, paired here with Kathy Ann Brown Mercian bush sage and Knockout Rose. (Photos courtesy of Norman Winter, The Garden Guy)



Pink Muhly grass almost defies logic with its cloud-like rose-pink blossoms. This grass is cold-hardy to zone 6. Notice how beautiful they are when massed together.

with Clara Curtis or Country Girl chrysanthemums.

While specimen plantings are exceptional, try grouping three together for an especially showy partnership. All of these grasses look incredible when backlit by the sun. The kiss of dew in the morning can make pink or white muhly grass look like giant spider webs until it dries.

To grow these muhly grass selections, choose a site in full

sun with fertile, organic-rich soil. Amend the soil as needed with 3 to 4 inches of organic matter like compost or humus. Till to a depth of 8 to 10 inches and incorporate 2 pounds of a slow-release 12-6-6 fertilizer.

Dig the planting hole two to three times as wide as the root ball but no deeper. Plant the muhly grass at the same depth it is growing in the container, with the crown slightly above the soil pro-

file. Space plants 24 to 36 inches apart and apply a good layer of mulch after planting.

In late winter, cut the foliage back to about 12 inches tall, or slightly more for the Lindheimer's muhly. Apply a light application of fertilizer when pruning and another one in midsummer. A little supplemental water during prolonged dry periods in the summer will pay dividends with an even more impressive show in the fall.

Divide clumps in early spring.

Jump on the grass bandwagon this fall. Muhly grasses are a great place to start, farms and ranches in North Texas and Southern Oklahoma will look even more picturesque. Plant some now, and your envious neighbors will probably accuse you of going to landscape design school. Follow me on my Facebook page @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy for more photos and garden inspiration.



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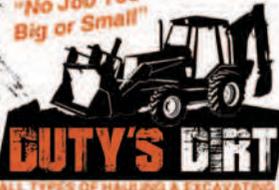
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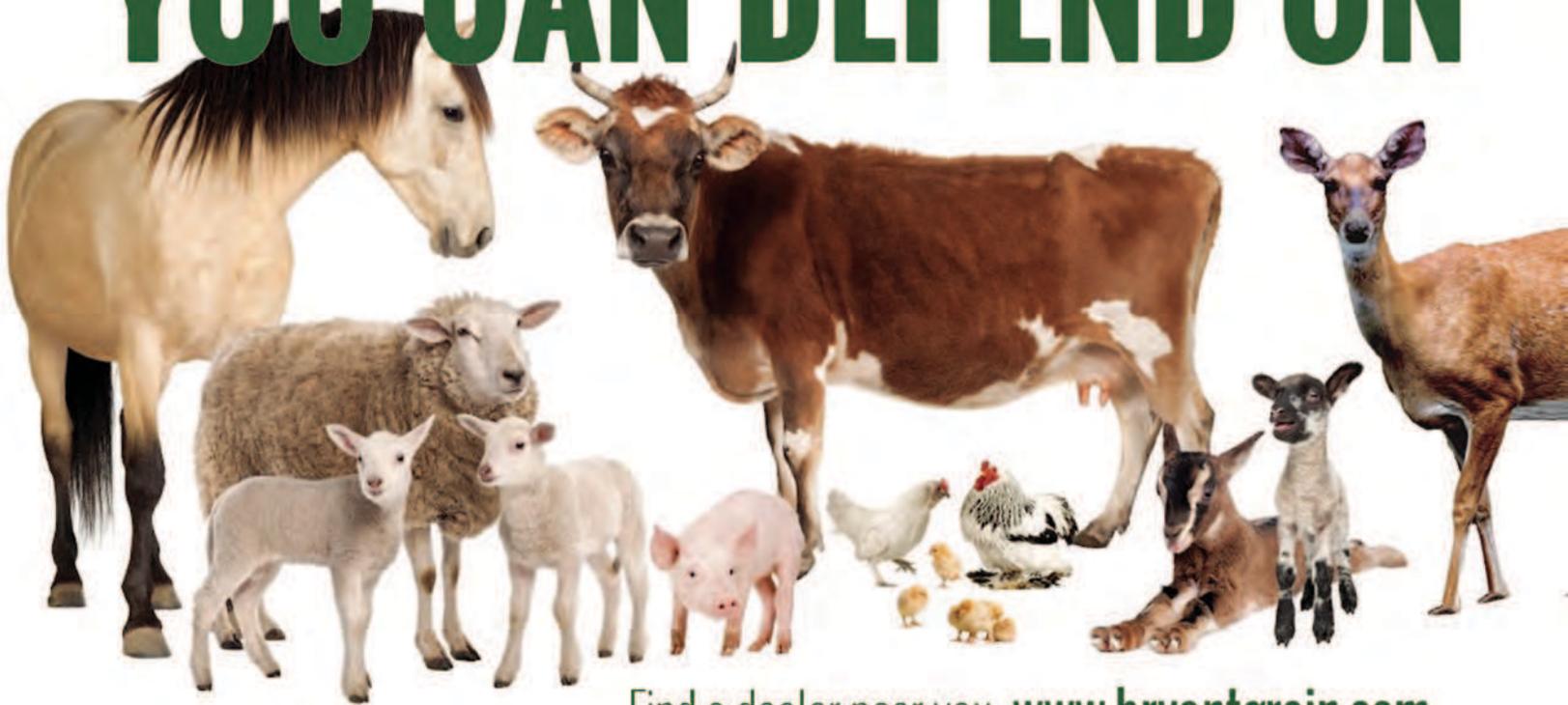


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By Jelly McClellan

A wood laced pen, full of cockleburs and thistle, next to cowboys riddled with grit and determination. As the day goes on, the plants get smashed to the ground disappearing, like as if a pack of goats had been in there for a few days. There's a heat glow on the metal surrounding, keeping us in like an electric fence, and a gentle breeze dances around our faces to remind us that fall is coming. 🇺🇸

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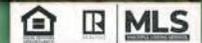
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