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OKFR

February 2016

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Volume 1 Issue 2

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Publisher

J. M. Winter

Editor

Laci Jones
editor@okfronline.com

Managing Editor

Jessica Crabtree
editor@ntfronline.com

Art Director

Kayla Jean Woods
kayla@post oakmedia.net

Advertising Director

Stephanie Cox
stephanie@post oakmedia.net

Advertising Executives

Susan Stewart
susan@post oakmedia.net

Kathy Miller

kathy@post oakmedia.net

Business Manager

Brenda Bingham
accounting@post oakmedia.net

Circulation Manager

Marnie Brown
subscriptions@post oakmedia.net

Copy Editor

Judy Wade

Contributing Writers

Amanda Martin
Barry Whitworth
Lacey Newlin
Dr. Lauren Lamb
Lisa Bryant
Judy Wade
Sara Honegger
Staci Mauney
Marty New
Rob Cooke

CONTACT US

OKFR Magazine
200 Walnut St.
Bowie, TX 76230
940-872-2076
www.okfronline.com

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Love is in the air...

Hello OKFR readers and welcome to the February issue of Oklahoma Farm & Ranch magazine. We have some great content this month. From chocolate festivals to town dances to spring birthing season, we hope you will “love” this February issue.

First read how crime in rural Oklahoma is rising, and learn about the three ways you can be robbed— leaving property in plain sight, falling into a management routine and not branding your property. With the increase in drug addictions and high cattle prices, read how to protect you and your farm or ranch from theft.

Next read how Ringling, Okla., came to be. John Ringling of the Ringling Brothers Circus was looking for a place to establish winter headquarters for the circus. A location was picked and construction of a railroad began. He later found out Oklahoma weather was not suitable for the circus animals, which changed the destiny of the southern Oklahoma town.

This month’s profile is custom boot maker from Guthrie, Okla., Raymond Dorwart. Dorwart spent many years traveling across the country working as a ranch hand before starting his boot making business a couple decades ago. The owner of Dorwart Custom Cow-Boy Boots believes in the art of making boots like bootmakers did 100 years ago! Read about Dorwart’s travels, religious testimony and how he landed in Guthrie, Okla.

Dancers can find love in the sleepy, southwest Oklahoma town on Saturday nights. With a population of seven, Cooperton, Okla., became the Cooperton Country Dance. Members of the local Square Dance Club got together in 1974 to find a location to start the dance. Since then, 61 couples have found love and married after meeting at this dance.

If you have an event, photo or article topic that you would like to see in Oklahoma Farm & Ranch, send it our way at editor@okfronline.com. Keep up with new OKFR updates on our Facebook page. For more information or subscription information, visit our website www.OKFRonline.com.

Until next month,



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OKFR / socializing

ON THE COVER

Raymond Dorwart traveled across the country working as a ranch hand for many years. Shortly after having a life-changing incident, he decided he needed to make a change. He started his boot making business in 1982 and eventually settled down in Guthrie, Okla. The owner of Dorwart Custom Cow-Boy Boots believes in the art of making boots like bootmakers did 100 years ago. However, he does not believe he is an artist, but perhaps a craftsman.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OKFR is now welcoming letters to the editor for its Socializing page, but some rules apply. They include:

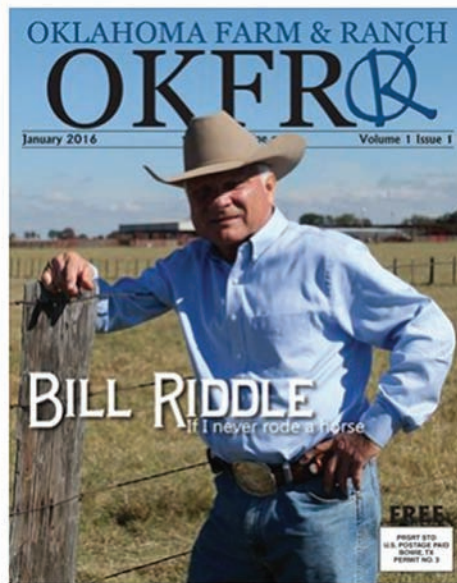
1. 125-word limit.
2. Deadline for submission is the first Wednesday of the month.
3. Only one letter per writer per issue.
4. All letters must include a name, address and phone number. Only the name and city of residence will be published.
5. All letters will be verified by the news staff by a phone call prior to publication. If the news staff is unable to contact the writer of a letter, the letter will be held until such times as contact is made.
6. Letters containing libelous statements or those intended as advertising will not be published.
7. Letters that target previous letter writers will be edited to remove the name of such letter writers who are non-candidates or non-public figures. Letters critical of previously published guest columns may identify the writer only once, and then only to make it clear which column they are writing about.
8. NTFR reserves the right to edit or reject any letters to the editor.
9. Letters must be mailed to OKFR Letter to the Editor, P.O. Box 831, Bowie, TX 76230 or emailed to editor@okfronline.com.

FACEBOOK WALL



We are pleased to announce the January 2016 profile feature is Bill Riddle of Bill Riddle Cutting Horses! Riddle was a school teacher for 10 years before focusing on his rodeo career. With a career in the cutting horse industry spanning more than 30 years, Riddle has won in excess of \$4.4 million, is a member of the National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame and wrote the original NCHA casebook.

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THREE WAYS TO GET ROBBED

Common mistakes attract agricultural property theft.

Farmers are generally trusting souls. Many of us grew up without locking the front door. Country folks look for the best in people, but our innocent nature may be inviting the fox into the hen house while increasing your risk of property theft.

Crime in rural areas is rising. Factors such as higher cattle prices and escalating methamphetamine addictions are driving agricultural property loss upward in Oklahoma according to two Oklahoma law enforcement officers.

Jerry Flowers, colonel and chief special agent over law enforcement of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, said several cattle rustling rings, including a large ring in northwestern Oklahoma that included more than 100 head, are cropping up. In late December, charges were filed on six defendants in the northwestern ring.

Bart Perrier, Special Ranger for the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, said the uptick in rural crime is market driven.

“In the fall of 2014, you could sell a 500-pound beef calf for \$1,500 — record high prices,” Perrier added. “Five years ago, that calf would bring \$700. Cattle are drastically down now around \$900 to \$1,000, but they are still up. As long as the prices are high, theft demand will be there. If the market were to crash today and go back to \$400 for five-weight cattle, no one would be stealing

them.”

On the contrary, while horse markets remain low, horses are not often stolen.

“Nine out of 10 cases where we arrest someone for stealing cattle, they are feeding addictions such as drugs or gambling and bad decisions,” Perrier said. “I’ve yet to arrest someone who was trying to feed his family. If there’s a crime, methamphetamine is behind it.”

If you remain unaware of your surroundings and are not taking safety precautions, you may be committing common mistakes that raise your risk of being robbed.

1. Leave Your Property in Plain Sight

In December, three people from Oklahoma and Logan counties were charged in a large farm equipment theft ring.

A four-month ODAFF investigation revealed thieves who targeted farms where large tractors and equipment were left in open fields near roadways.

The perpetrators scouted the equipment, obtained a GPS reading on the location and stole the equipment in the dark of night. The equipment was then sold to an Oklahoma auto repairman for pennies on the dollar.

One older model John Deere 5450 tractor that a farmer purchased for \$65,000 sold for \$3,000, according to Flowers.

2. Fall into a Management Routine

Winter brings a small drop in crimes because ranchers are out



feeding and checking livestock daily, according to Perrier. Summertime grazing creates weeks where people don’t count their livestock, resulting in an easy target for thieves.

“If you count your cattle regularly, you can narrow down the timeframe the cattle went missing,” he said.

He said it is also important to vary the times you feed or check your cattle, so people do not learn your patterns. Feeding in pens or building pens close to the road also increases the chance other people can catch your livestock more easily.

“If you make it convenient for yourself, it’s also making it convenient for a thief,” Perrier said.

Leaving gates unlocked is another invitation for theft. Perrier said producers often tell him that thieves will cut the lock, but broken locks give landowner physical evidence and a timeframe that the gate has been breached.



BY LISA BRYANT

PHOTO DETAILS

A brand is the No. 1 identifier of livestock in the state of Oklahoma. Other forms of identification do not stand up in a court of law, although ear notches and tattoos may help corroborate a brand. (Photo by Jessica Crabtree)



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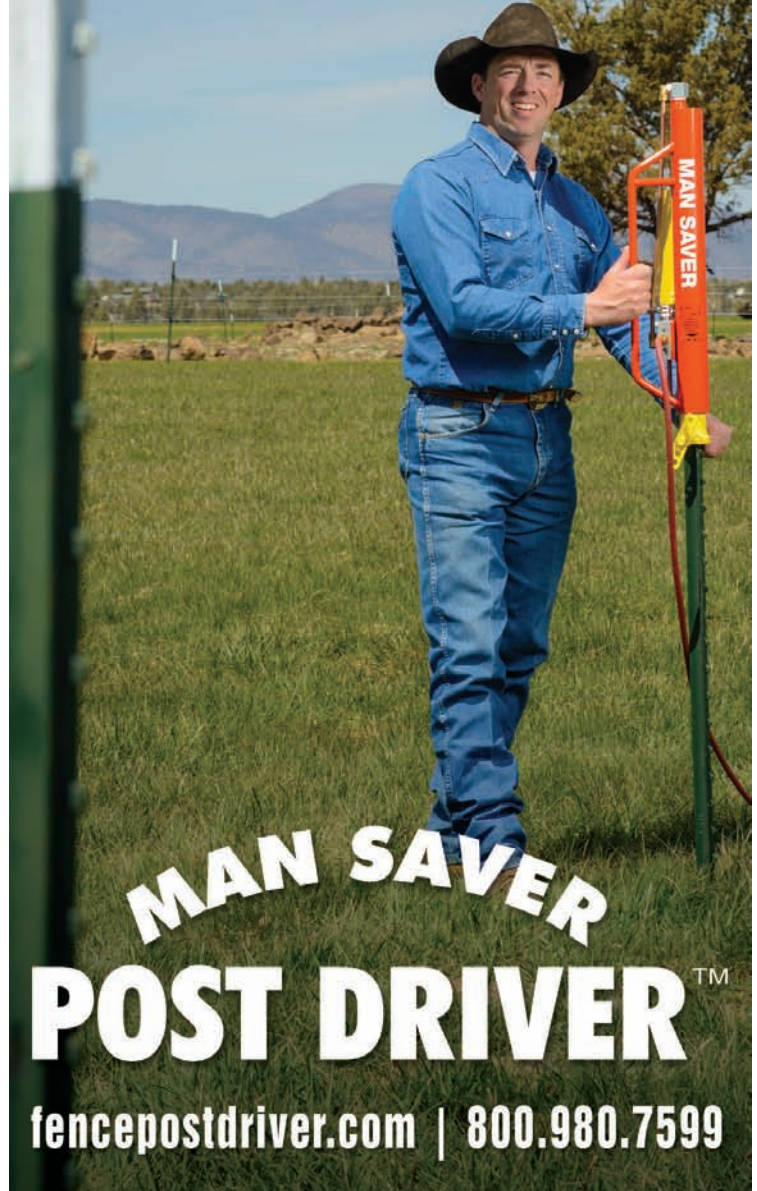
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AG THEFT

Continued from page 10

3. Don't Brand Your Property

A brand is the No. 1 identifier of livestock in the state of Oklahoma, Perrier said.

"It's a unique identifier that positively identifies that animal to be yours," he added.

Other forms of identification do not stand up in a court of law, although ear notches and tattoos may help corroborate a brand.

It pays to identify tack and equipment too. Since social security numbers are no longer recommended as an identification method, Perrier suggests identifying trailers, saddles and equipment with your driver's license number.

To Catch A Thief

"Call 9-1-1 and don't approach them if you catch a thief in the act," Perrier said.

He recommends taking down tag numbers, vehicle descriptions and physical descriptions of the person.

"There's no property in this world worth dying over," Perrier said.

If the criminals are on drugs like methamphetamines, they are not in the right frame of mind and are likely to carry a weapon, he added.

"You don't have the right to shoot," Perrier added. "The only



If you remain unaware of your surroundings and are not taking safety precautions, you may be committing common mistakes that raise your risk of being robbed. One way to protect yourself from getting robbed is to keep equipment out in plain sight. (Courtesy photo)

time you can use deadly force is if you are in fear for your life. Just because someone is on your property, you cannot use deadly force or you're going to prison."

If you find property stolen, Perrier said you should always call your sheriff first.

"The sheriff has jurisdiction over your county while I cover

22 counties across the state," he said.

After calling the sheriff, farmers and ranchers can then call the TSCRA Rangers or the ODAFF Investigative Services Unit for further assistance. Both teams of agents aid the sheriff's office in working cases. The membership base funds the TSCRA Rangers

and member thefts receive priority attention, but Perrier said they will work for all victims of agricultural property theft.

Taking simple management precautions can minimize your risk of property theft. Stay aware of your surroundings and make farm and ranch safety a priority. ★

2015 OKLAHOMA AG CRIMES

- 2,000 head of cattle reported stolen
- 45 to 50 percent of cattle recovered
- \$3 million of loss in livestock and equipment
- 200 felony cases closed
- 450 felony criminal charges filed
- Nine Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry agents conducted 150 criminal investigations.

**Statistics reported to the Investigative Services Unit of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.
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Why body condition is important in the cow herd



Body condition scores of beef cows at the time of calving have the greatest impact on subsequent rebreeding performance.

One of the major constraints in the improvement of reproductive efficiency is the duration of the post-calving anestrus period. If cows are to maintain a calving interval of one year, they must conceive within 80 days to 85 days after calving. Calving intervals in excess of 12 months are often caused by nutritional stress at some point, which results in thin body condition and poor reproductive performance.

Research has shown mature and young cows that maintain body weight have ample energy reserves before parturition, exhibited estrus sooner than cows that lost considerable body weight and consequently had poor energy reserves. Body weight change

during pregnancy is confounded with embryo and placenta growth. Therefore, the estimation of body fat by use of body condition scores is more useful in quantifying the energy status of beef cows. The system of body condition scoring is an excellent estimator of percentage of body fat in beef cows.

The processes of fetal development, delivering a calf, milk production and repair of the reproductive tract are all physiological stresses. These stresses require availability and utilization of large quantities of energy to enable cows to be rebred in the required 85 days.

Added to physiological stresses are the environmental stresses of cold, wet weather on spring calving cows. In normal cow diets, energy intake will be below the amount needed to maintain body weight and condition. As the intake falls short of the energy utilized, the

cow compensates by mobilizing stored energy and over a period of several weeks, a noticeable change in the outward appearance of the cow takes place.

Cows that have a thin body condition at calving return to estrus slowly. Postpartum increases in energy intake and can modify the length of the postpartum interval.

However, increases in the quality and quantity of feed to increase postpartum body condition can be very expensive. Improvement in reproductive performance achieved by expensive postpartum feeding to thin cows may not be adequate to justify the cost of the additional nutrients.

The influence of nutrition before calving is a major factor that controls the length of time between calving and the return to estrus.

See COWS page 16



BY MARTY NEW

marty.new@okstate.edu

PHOTO DETAILS

Body condition scoring has allowed cattlemen to continually evaluate their nutritional program. An efficient way to utilize BCS involves sorting cows by condition 90 to 100 days prior to calving. (Photo by Jacob Redway)



Research has shown mature and young cows that maintain body weight have ample energy reserves before parturition, exhibited estrus sooner than cows that lost considerable body weight and consequently had poor energy reserves. (Photo by Jacob Redway)

Cows

Continued from page 15

Thin cows with a BCS score of four or less at calving produce less colostrum as well as give birth to less vigorous calves that are slower to stand.

The impact of quality and quantity of colostrum will effect these calves' immunoglobulin levels, thus harming their ability to overcome early calf-hood disease challenges.

It is much easier to increase condition in cows before rather than after they calve. High nutrition after calving is directed first

toward milk production. Feeding cows to gain condition early in lactation therefore leads to increased milk production but has little effect on body condition.

Cows prior to calving and through breeding should have a BCS of five or higher to have good reproductive performance. First-calf heifers should have a BCS of six. Spring-calving cows are still consuming harvested forages and lactating will generally lose one BCS following calving.

Over-stocking pastures is a

common cause of poor body condition and reproductive failure. Proper stocking, year-round mineral supplementation and timely use of protein supplement offer potential for economically improving body condition score and reproductive performance.

An efficient way to utilize BCS involves sorting cows by condition 90 to 100 days prior to calving.

Feed each group to have condition scores of five to six at calving. These would be logical

scores for achieving maximum reproductive performance while holding supplemental feed costs to a minimum.

Body condition scoring has allowed cattlemen to continually evaluate their nutritional program.

By evaluating cow condition at strategic times of the year, it is possible to coordinate use of the forage resource with nutritional needs of the cow herd so supplemental feed and hay needs are reduced to a minimum.*

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Colostrum: A Good Start to Life



During the final weeks of pregnancy, cows begin to develop the first milk. This first milk that the calf will ingest is called colostrum. Colostrum is high in fat and protein which provides the calf a good start in life.

It is full of vitamins and minerals that are essential for certain bodily functions. Possibly the most important part of colostrum is the presence of immunoglobulins. The dam passes immunity to the calf through immunoglobulins. This protects the newborn from pathogens until his or her immune system matures.

When comparing, calves that fail to get adequate amounts of immunoglobulins are more likely to become ill or die before weaning than calves that received adequate amounts of immunoglobulins. Without the protection that colostrum provides, even the calves that survive will perform poorly when compared to the rest of the herd.

Since colostrum is vital to

healthy start in life, what can a producer do to ensure that the calf gets all the protection possible?

First, the producer needs to make sure that the dam is in good body condition at calving. Cows that are in poor condition at calving time not only produce poor quality colostrum but a smaller amount as well.

A calf must ingest large quantities of colostrum that is full of nutrients and immunoglobulins to be fully protected. A good nutrition program that provides all the nutrient requirements for the cow is essential.

Secondly, cows need to be in good health and properly vaccinated. Cows that are battling infections not only will have a hard time producing high-quality colostrum but will have a hard time producing a sufficient quantity. Waiting to see if a sick cow will improve on her own over time is stressful on the cow and usually results in an illness that is more difficult to treat. Any illness with

a cow should be dealt with in a timely fashion, especially when the cow is in late pregnancy.

Cows not only need to be in good health to produce quality colostrum, but they should also be properly vaccinated. Cows that are on a routine vaccination schedule are more likely to provide colostrum with high immunoglobulins. Specific vaccines that target the common bacteria and viruses responsible for certain diseases that newborns get are available. Since diarrhea is one of the more common problems that newborns get, it is very beneficial to protect against the causes of this illness. Producers should consult with their veterinarian for advice on a good vaccination program.

Thirdly, absorption of colostrum is time dependent. Colostrum is highly absorbed following birth and declines rapidly over the next 24 to 36 hours. The best time for absorption is in the first six hours following birth, and calves should **See COLOSTRUM page 19**



BY BARRY WHITWORTH

barry.whitworth@okstate.edu

PHOTO DETAILS

Calves that fail to get adequate amounts of immunoglobulins from colostrum are more likely to become ill or die before weaning than calves that received adequate amounts of immunoglobulins. (Courtesy photo)

Colostrum

receive a minimum of two quarts of colostrum during this time. Calves should receive two more quarts by 12 hours following birth. These are minimal amounts and some calves will require more.

Any condition that interferes with the calf nursing needs to be dealt with promptly. Interferences such as calving difficulties, a cow refusing her calf or adverse weather conditions may result in a calf not ingesting adequate amounts of colostrum.

Calving difficulties usually result in a stressed calf, and they may be weaker and not aggressive enough to nurse properly. For this reason, producers may want to intervene early. This will require milking the cow or finding another source of colostrum. A local dairy may be a good source of colostrum. Colostrum substitutes

or replacers are available at retail stores, but they do not compare in quality to the mother's colostrum and should only be used as a last resort.

Weather can also prevent calves from receiving adequate colostrum. Calves left out in the extreme conditions tend to stay down and not get up to nurse. If freezing or harsh weather conditions occur, some type of protection should be provided for the calf. Providing a temporary shelter or moving the calf to a barn is recommended.

The importance of a calf getting adequate amounts of high-quality colostrum cannot be overstated. Without colostrum most calves will die or will become ill, and those that do survive will most likely always be poor doers.

Producers need to ensure that



Cows not only need to be in good health to produce quality colostrum, but they should also be properly vaccinated. Cows that are on a routine vaccination schedule are more likely to provide colostrum with high immunoglobulins. (Photo by Laci Jones)

their calves receive adequate amounts of high-quality colostrum to give the best possible start in life. If you have more questions

about colostrum or its importance, please visit with your local veterinarian or your local county extension educator. *

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Pregnancy Toxemia in Goats



With spring approaching, so does kidding season. Goat owners prepare for the expected including late nights and assisted births. However, preparing for the unexpected including diseases may be challenging.

Pregnancy toxemia, also known as ketosis, occurs primarily during the last six weeks of pregnancy in sheep and goats, according to Katie Simpson, DVM, MS, DACVIM. The disease is quite common but often unrecognized in the earlier stages, she said.

“Pregnancy toxemia is basically a disease that occurs because of disorders in energy metabolism,” Simpson said.

Animals carrying multiple fetuses are more likely to develop pregnancy toxemia. The more fetuses a dam carries, the more energy is required, she explained.

“For some reason, they aren’t getting enough energy to meet the fetuses’ requirements in late

pregnancy,” Simpson said. “They start to utilize their own essential fat reserves in order to produce enough energy for the fetuses.”

To some extent, genetics play a role in pregnancy toxemia, she said. Both the male and female determine how many kids are going to be born.

Certain genetic lines and breeds are more likely to have more kids, she explained.

“In the early stages, the first thing that an owner usually notices is the animal has a decreased appetite or goes off feed entirely,” Simpson said

The goats are also weak and lethargic, depressed and sometimes their lower legs will swell during the initial stages, Simpson said.

“Some of them will actually go down, and not want or be able to get back up,” she added.

Pregnancy toxemia may be difficult to catch because the initial symptoms are vague. If an owner does not know how many fetuses

a goat is carrying, Simpson said the owner may not even think pregnancy toxemia is a possibility and it can go undetected. She said other disease processes can also lead to pregnancy toxemia.

“What [owners] may actually notice initially are signs of other diseases,” Simpson said. “Those diseases lead to pregnancy toxemia because they make the animal go off feed at a critical time during their pregnancy.”

Simpson said major diseases and illnesses that could lead to pregnancy toxemia are worm infestations, pneumonia, foot rot or anything that will inhibit the desire or ability to travel to feed.

The later symptoms are neurological including head pressing, tremors and sometimes seizure activity. Star gazing also occurs, which is where the goat pulls its head and neck back over its back, she explained.

“Usually in those stages, the
See GOATS page 21



BY LACI JONES

editor@okfronline.com

PHOTO DETAILS

Pregnancy toxemia may be difficult to catch because the initial symptoms are vague. Pregnancy toxemia is treatable, but treatment options depend on the individual animal and how much money a person is willing to invest in trying to treat it. (Photo by Laci Jones)

Goats

animal will unfortunately end up dying,” Simpson said.

Pregnancy toxemia is treatable, but not one treatment fixes all, she explained.

“It really depends on the individual animal and how much money a person is willing to invest in trying to treat it,” Simpson said. “There’s a number of different things you can treat them with, but there’s no guarantee of success with any of them.”

Pregnancy toxemia can be treated with propylene glycol, which is a glucose (or sugar) precursor treatment given orally. Simpson said goats can also be treated early by administering electrolyte solutions to correct any imbalances.

“Many times, by the time pregnancy toxemia is caught in the animals, the animal requires more intensive treatment than something given by mouth, because the rumen is not functioning correctly,” Simpson said.

She suggested putting the goats on a dextrose IV. She also said giving them insulin can help reverse their hormonal imbalances.

“During the last stages, if money is particularly of concern, trying to get the fetuses out quickly can remove the energy drain,” Simpson said. “You can induce parturition, or you can do a C-section.”

Simpson and other researchers studied pregnancy toxemia when she worked at Oklahoma State University. Simpson said they found the pregnancy toxemia diseases in goats and sheep were not as similar as they thought.

“Boer goats were the main breed we saw having the problem in goats,” Simpson said. “They tended to have a much higher rate of dystocia, or difficulty giving birth, if they had pregnancy toxemia.”

If they survived to kidding,



Boer goats were the main breed Simpson saw having pregnancy toxemia in goats. They tended to have a much higher rate of dystocia, or difficulty giving birth, if they had the disease. If the goats survived to kidding, they had a much higher rate of retained placenta. (Photo by Laci Jones)

Simpson said Boer goats also had a higher rate of retained fetal membranes or retained placenta, and uterine infections. The goats also developed fatty liver, which can be a secondary problem, she added.

Simpson said goat herds can experience outbreaks due to change in management, feeding or stress. Routine procedures that involve catching animals like deworming can cause stress.

“Any kind of procedure that will cause an animal to be stressed or go off feed for any reason shouldn’t be done in late pregnancy,” Simpson said.

Simpson said producers can help prevent this disease by increasing the plane of nutrition during the last six weeks of pregnancy.

“Feed things like grain and/or alfalfa that are higher in energy but don’t require a large amount of room in the stomach compartment in order to get energy into the animals,” Simpson suggested.

Owners need to make sure the goats are not too thin or too fat going into the last half of pregnancy because either body condition can contribute to the disease, she explained.

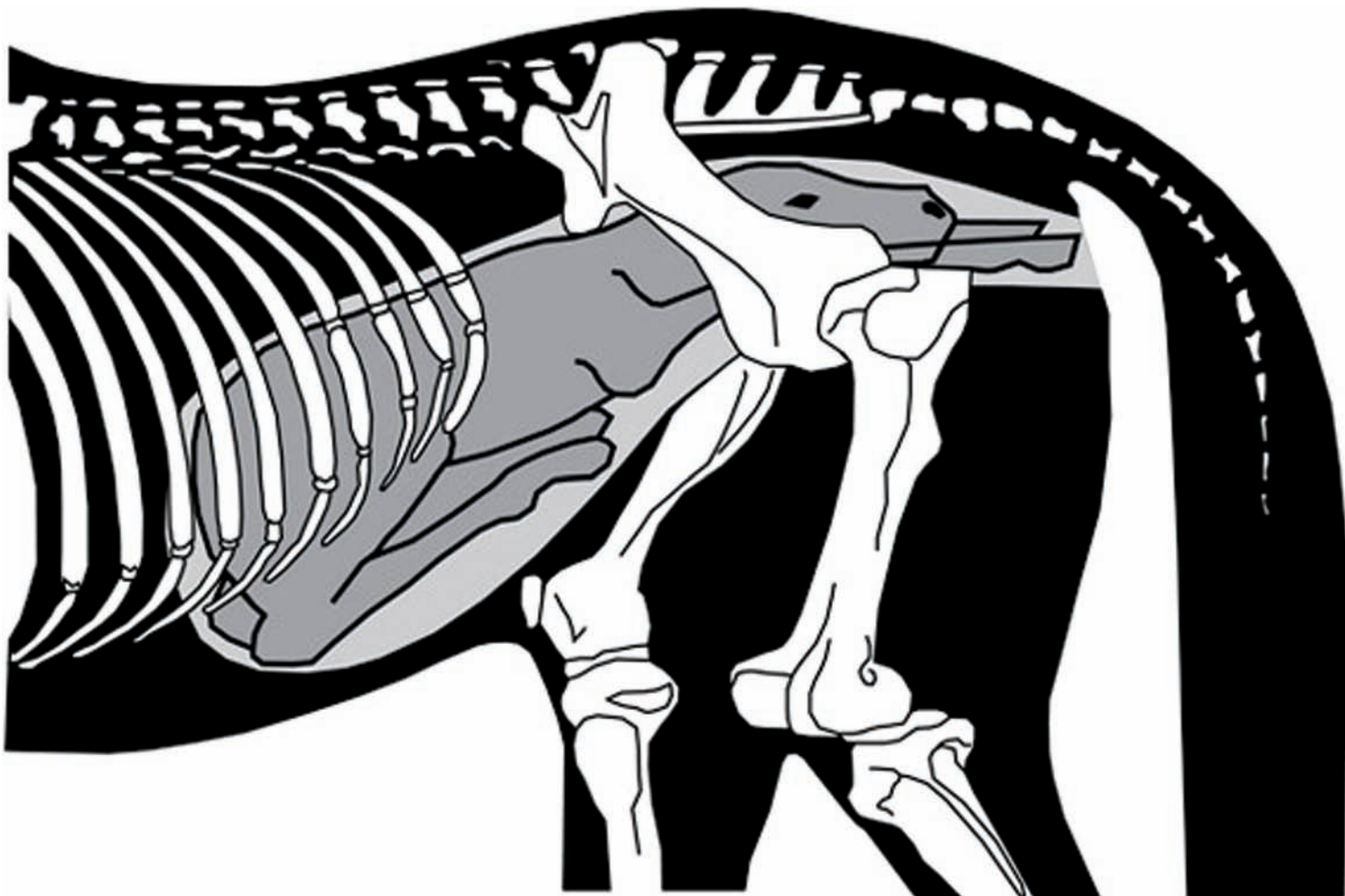
She said determining how many fetuses the goats are carrying early in the pregnancy allows the owner to easily manage each animal’s feed requirements. An owner can divide the animals based on how many fetuses they are carrying. The animals carrying triplets or quadruplets require more energy than those carrying a single fetus or twins.

Simpson said the most common test for pregnancy toxemia is a urine test for ketone bodies. Producers can purchase the small strips through a local veterinarian. High levels of ketone bodies indicate the goat has the disease, she said. Blood tests can also be conducted to test for the disease, she added.

“In sheep this is usually still true, but testing for blood sugar levels in goats is actually not an accurate test to determine if pregnancy toxemia is a problem,” Simpson said. “Goats with pregnancy toxemia do not typically have low blood sugar, so that can be misleading.”

Simpson recommended consulting with a local veterinarian as the goats are identified and treated for pregnancy toxemia. ★

How to care for a foaling mare



If you are expecting a foal this spring, congratulations—you are nearly home free. The good news is that the birth of a new born foal, although exciting, is usually uneventful and complication free.

Here is an outline of what you should expect during a normal parturition as well as what to look for if there is a complication with the foaling process.

The normal pregnancy for a mare can last anywhere between 320 to 360 days. Although induced labor is an option for a mare who carries her foal beyond 330 days, this option should be avoided due to the possible life threatening

risks it presents for the mare and foal. Only in rare circumstances, such as a life threatening disease or an infection in the placenta should parturition be induced.

Labor in the mare is divided into three stages, and each stage has a set time interval.

You should contact your veterinarian as soon as possible if there is any deviation from the time interval. The mare should foal unassisted and undisturbed, but you should be present to observe the foaling.

Stage One

Stage one begins with the onset of contractions and will generally last one to two hours. Even in a

normal delivery, the mare may stand up, lie down and roll several times in an effort to properly position the foal for delivery.

During this phase, contractions move the foal through the cervix and into position in the birth canal. The fetal membranes, allantois, may become visible at the mare's vulva. When the sac breaks, signaled by a rush of fluid, may be confused with urination and marks the end of stage one.

Stage one labor can also be confused with colic. If your mare seems in pain beyond one to two hours or the pain becomes severe, contact your veterinarian.

See FOALING page 23



**BY LAUREN LAMB,
DVM, MS**

PHOTO DETAILS

Foal being positioned within the birth canal during labor. The foal is moving through the birth canal head first with its front feet in front of its head. (Courtesy of Lauren Lamb)

Foaling

Stage Two

Stage two is the actual expulsion of the foal, and this phase moves relatively quickly. If it takes more than 30 minutes for the mare to deliver, there is most likely a problem. If there is no significant progress within 10 to 15 minutes after the membranes rupture, call your veterinarian immediately.

If labor seems to be progressing, wait and watch. Normal presentation of the foal resembles a diving position—front feet first, one slightly ahead of the other, hooves down, followed closely by the nose, head, neck, shoulders and hindquarters.

Call your veterinarian if you suspect any deviation from the normal delivery position—hoof soles are up; the foal is backwards or upside down. The deadliest of foaling emergencies is a premature rupture of the chorioallantois, known as “red bag delivery.” When this type of delivery occurs, the foal has lost its oxygen supply and needs to be delivered immediately.

Do not use anything other than your hands to pull the foal. Using a mechanical device can result in serious injury to the mare and/or foal. Normal membranes that cover the foal are white or yellow and translucent.

Stage Three

Stage three labor begins after delivery, where the afterbirth, also known as placenta, is expelled. Most placentas are passed within one to three hours after the foal is delivered. If the placenta has not passed within three hours, call your veterinarian. A retained placenta can cause serious problems including massive infection and laminitis. The placenta should be inspected to make sure it is completely expelled.

Following the delivery, allow



This is a picture of what the normal fetal membranes look like. Notice that we can see the feet, but not the head. Also the sole of the hooves are pointing down, towards the mare's hocks. These are both part of the normal positioning of the foal during delivery. (Courtesy of Lauren Lamb)

the mare and foal time to rest and recover. Do not cut or clamp the cord. Cutting or clamping could deprive the foal of blood from the placenta or increase the risk of an infection in the foal. The umbilical cord will break a couple of inches from the foal's navel when the mare stands up. Once the umbilical cord is torn, the umbilical stump should be dipped in a chlorhexidine water solution ratio of 1-to-4 every six to eight hours for the first 72 hours of life to decrease the risk of an infection.

After Delivery

I like to use the rule of one, two, three. The foal should be standing by one hour, nursing by two hours and pass their meconium by three hours. Meconium is the first fecal matter that the foal passes and is a good sign that the foal's gastrointestinal tract is functioning properly. Call your veterinarian

if the foal is not standing, nursing or passing meconium at the proper times.

It is essential that the foal receive an adequate supply of colostrum. Colostrum, the mare's first milk, is extremely rich in antibodies which protect the foal. It provides the foal with passive immunity to help prevent disease until its own immune system kicks in.

A foal must receive colostrum within the first eight to 12 hours of life in order to absorb the antibodies. If a foal is too weak to nurse, it may be necessary to milk the mare and give the colostrum to the foal using a stomach tube.

If a mare appears to be leaking an excessive amount of milk prior to birth, consult your veterinarian. This pre-foaling milk is not typically colostrum-rich.

However, depending on your

veterinarian's recommendation, the mare may be milked and the colostrum frozen to give to the foal shortly after birth. The foal's serum can be tested by your veterinarian at eight to nine hours of age to evaluate immunoglobulin (IgG) antibody levels.

The majority of absorption, 85 percent, takes place within the first six to eight hours. No antibodies from the colostrum are absorbed after 24 hours of life.

Your only option after 24 hours will be a plasma transfusion. If IgG is inadequate, treatment for failure of passive transfer (FPT) should be instituted by your veterinarian.

Finally, when your veterinarian is at your farm testing the IgG levels, the veterinarian should look for any genetic defects in the foal and/or any post-foaling injuries in the mare and foal.*

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5 Common Winter Horse Care Mistakes

With the winter season in full swing, it is especially important to make certain your livestock are well taken care of.

“Winter is the time where we see the most colic in horses, many horse care issues and a lot of respiratory and skin issues,” said Shem Oliver, DVM, board certified surgeon and partner at Performance Equine Associates in Thackerville, Okla.

Ensure your horse is taken care of all season long by avoiding these five common winter horse care mistakes.

1. Over Blanketing

It may be difficult not to feel guilty about leaving a horse out in the cold. Horse owners may be tempted to rush to their horse’s aid and pile blankets on them, but Oliver said that may not be the best idea.

“I see both sides of the spectrum—over blanketing and under

blanketing,” he said. “Usually under blanketing is less of a problem.”

Oliver said he rarely sees an under-blanketed horse because horses with short hair coats year-round are often blanketed appropriately. Oliver said owners that have horses living outside are more likely to over-blanket.

“Those horses adapt by growing a longer hair coat,” Oliver explained. “An owner puts the heavy winter blanket on them when it gets cold, but doesn’t take it off of them at the appropriate time.”

Over blanketing can cause overheating, which may lead to dehydration as well as other health problems. Oliver said over blanketing can also cause a horse to sweat, which may allow fungus to grow and lead to skin conditions like dermatitis. Sweating can also make the horse colder.

“The main thing with blankets is you have to adjust it based on

how your horse responds to blanketing,” Oliver said. “If you put the blanket on when it is too warm and they start to sweat, the next time you don’t need to blanket until it is a little cooler.”

Light blankets should be placed on horses with little to no hair at around 65 degrees Fahrenheit, he said. When the temperature drops to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, a heavier blanket is required. Long-haired horses may need a blanket at colder temperatures.

Oliver said more management is required than just putting a blanket on and turning them out to the pasture.

“I see people who leave a blanket on for a week,” he said. “They pull it off and see the horses have a cut or rub sore that the blankets cover up.”

He said rub sores can be caused by an ill-fitted blanket.

“Checking horses appropri-
See WINTER page 26



BY LACI JONES

editor@okfronline.com

PHOTO DETAILS

Horses adapt to the winter elements by growing a longer hair coat. An owner can make the mistake of putting a heavy winter blanket on horses when it may not be needed. (Courtesy photo)

Winter

Continued from page 25

ately every day, taking the blanket off, making sure it's clean and the horse is clean underneath is key if you are going to blanket a horse," he added.

2. Lack of Shelter

A common mistake made by horse owners is horses not having enough shelter from the elements.

"I don't think you can have too much shelter," Oliver said. "The only way you can have too much shelter is if they are not used to being confined to a stall. You can have issues with colic."

If an owner has horses housed in a barn, the barn should have proper ventilation. Proper ventilation eliminates excess moisture and condensation buildup, which impacts a horse's respiratory health.

"At minimum, horses need to have a three-sided shelter in their pasture where they can get out of the wind and elements," Oliver said.

Horses will more readily go into a shelter if there is a large opening, Oliver said. A three-sided shelter also allows horses to take shelter during weather storms and return when it passes. The opening of the three-sided shelter should face away from the elements.

"The south side is usually open because the wind usually comes from the west or north as well as rain or snow," Oliver said.

How large a shelter is needed depends on the number of horses in the pasture, Oliver said.

"If you have 20 horses in a pasture and only one three-sided shelter, then they are not going to cram themselves in there," Oliver said. "Horses, while they will get along, are not going to pack themselves in a shelter."

3. No Beauty Maintenance

Due to winter weather condi-



Horses are more neglected in the winter. An owner should check their horse each day for injuries and to make sure they are drinking enough water. (Courtesy photo)

tions, a horse owner may not see his horse every day. An owner may not catch a problem that may occur when they are not riding or grooming as often.

"You see things like their hoof care becoming neglected," Oliver said. "They get foot abscesses, thrush and/or they get long feet."

Horses travel on uneven, frozen ground that could possibly crack and break hooves. Regular hoof trimming or shoeing is important

even in the winter, he explained.

"The main thing is treating horses like you would as if you were riding them every day including grooming their hair coat and giving them a bath even though it is cold," Oliver said.

A horse owner needs to make certain the horse is dry before going back outside. The drying process takes longer in the winter, he added.

By not grooming or riding, an

owner may not notice a horse's illnesses, injuries or weight loss. Grooming daily allows owners to check for parasites, wounds, or weight loss.

"Maintain a regular schedule of grooming care and hoof care," Oliver said. "A lot of times when people aren't riding like they would in the summer, it slips their mind. It is easy to happen to anybody."

See HORSES page 27

Horses

4. Not Increasing Rations

"A lot of times, people feed horses less in the winter," Oliver said. "Because they are riding less, the owners think the horses need less feed, but they actually need more feed in the winter."

While horses do not expend as much energy riding, they will burn more calories to stay warm in the cooler weather. He said underfeeding is why horses "go downhill" in the winter and can cause weight loss. The horses might not need as much grain, Oliver said. However, the horses need more forage in the form of hay or increased fiber in their diet. Forage provides an excellent source of calories and the large amounts of fiber helps keep horses warmer in the winter, he added.

"A good rule of thumb that I

learned in vet school is they need about one percent more forage for every degree below freezing it gets," Oliver said. "For example, if it's in the 20s, they need 10 percent more feed. If they are getting 20 pounds of feed, then you will need to add two pounds more to their feed to maintain."

Vitamins and minerals are always required, especially in the winter, he said. Adequate levels of vitamins are available in good quality horse feed and hay, but a vitamin and mineral supplement can help.

"Keeping electrolytes, salt blocks and minerals out for horses will help keep a balanced diet, but it will also stimulate them to drink more water," Oliver said.

5. Dehydration

Oliver said horse dehydration

may be the No. 1 mistake amongst horse owners. Water begins to freeze as temperatures begin to drop, and snow and ice cannot be substituted for drinking water.

"Usually if a horse runs into a problem in the winter, it is because their water is frozen over and they get dehydrated or the horse doesn't drink as much because the water is cold," Oliver said.

A horse will drink water above 50 degrees Fahrenheit, Oliver explained. Fresh, warm water is necessary for horse hydration, he added.

If a horse is not properly hydrated, they will consume less ration regardless of the quality of feed. Grain and hay fed mostly in the winter months contains less than 15 percent moisture, where pasture grasses contain approxi-

mately 80 percent moisture.

Dehydration in horses can lead to weight loss, lack of energy and impaction colic, Oliver said.

Investing in a heating device specifically designed for waterers and troughs can help keep horses hydrated all winter long.

He said horses are more neglected in the winter. An owner should check their horse each day for injuries and to make sure they are drinking enough, he added.

In addition to these five common mistakes, Oliver said owners should make sure to exercise their horses year round.

"The main thing is nothing should change as far as the time of year," Oliver said. "Not changing their schedule from summer to winter is key." *



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ENDEAVOR TO PERSEVERE

An old Singer sewing machine hums as Raymond Dorwart, owner of Dorwart Custom Cow-Boy Boots in Guthrie, Okla., sews his third row, a fuchsia color into orange kid goat leather.

“Wait until you see what it looks like with the fourth strand,” Dorwart said. “It’s amazing how adding one color will change the whole look.”

After sewing for 20 more minutes, he looked up and said, “It is amazing how you can take something as simple as this piece of leather and create those boots.”

Dorwart said he does not consider himself an artist but perhaps a craftsman. Whether they are dress boots or work boots, each boot he builds is meant to be used. He builds cowboy boots the same way they were built 100 years ago.

“These boots have certain lines and looks to them,” Dorwart said. “They look the same way they did even 40 years ago, and they are used for the reason they were meant for: stuck in a stirrup.”

Dorwart’s passion for boot making stemmed from his years working as a ranch hand across the United States. He was born in McCook, Neb., and his family moved across Nebraska, Colorado and California throughout his childhood.

“I went to 11 different schools from kindergarten to my senior year,” Dorwart said.

Dorwart’s father was always looking for a better job to support his family. He succeeded, as each job was an increase to his family’s income, Dorwart added.

“He did all kinds of stuff for work, but not boot making,” he chuckled. “That’s for sure.”

Dorwart’s father did many

different jobs like working at a rocket propellant manufacturing facility. At one point, he was a security guard for Hughes Aircraft in Calif., and personally knew Howard Hughes.

Dorwart said moving was challenging for him. Moving was a process of becoming the new kid at school, fighting to make new friends and finally building bonds. By the time Dorwart built relationships, his family moved and he had to start the process all over again.

However, the experience was not all bad, he said.

“It was a pretty good deal because I got to experience a lot of different cultures and people,” Dorwart said. “It helped me be able to visit with just about anybody.”

After graduating high school, Dorwart traveled to Montana for work.

“My cousin called me up and said he was going to Montana,” Dorwart said. “He had a job lined up at Glacier National Park. Of course, I am 17-years-old and think I could probably do anything, so I went up there with him.”

When Dorwart arrived at Glacier National Park headquarters, he was told all positions were full until the following year. However, a man walked by and asked him if he knew horses and if he could ride.

“I said, ‘I can ride. I have been since I was four-years-old,’” Dorwart said. “He said, ‘I got a job for you if you want it.’”

For two years, Dorwart ran a pack string, where he packed supplies for the fire lookouts and trail crew. He was also occasionally called in as a firefighter in the park. Dorwart said he got the job

because of his Lord and Savior.

“I did not know my Lord and Savior at that time,” Dorwart said. “It was His doing because those jobs were so sought after that you had to have a congressman or senator from your state to recommend you for that job.”

Dorwart said one experience during his first year at the national park in ‘68 was a memorable experience.

“Early one morning, three young guys in their very early 20s came in the ranger’s station,” Dorwart said. “They were scared.”

The young men were camping at a beaver dam at the head waters of Oley Creek, he said. A grizzly bear ran the men up a tree, where they spent the night. The men traveled roughly 37 miles down to the ranger’s station the following morning.

“The park ranger said, ‘We need to ride up there and see what’s going on,’” Dorwart said. “So, I got a couple of horses, saddled them and got them ready to go.”

Dorwart and the ranger arrived at the dam by late evening. They caught a half a dozen cutthroat trout for dinner and built a small fire.

“It was a little overcast,” Dorwart said. “It started getting dark early anyways because of the mountain range on the west side of where we camped.”

After eating dinner, Dorwart and the ranger laid out their bedrolls. They had their horses picketed beside them in case the bear returned.

“I’m lying there, and my eyes are wide open,” Dorwart said. “I’m hearing everything because I can’t see anything. There was no starlight, no nothing. It was darker than inside a black cow.”

After several hours, Dorwart finally drifted off to sleep. He was awakened by a loud sound in the morning. Wearing only a t-shirt and shorts, he said he quickly jumped out of his bedroll and climbed the nearest tree.

“I looked back down, and the ranger is lying there, looking up at me and laughing,” Dorwart chuckled. “It was just a horse coughing, but man, I was scared.”

Dorwart left the camp with skinned knees and legs, but he can laugh about the experience now. He left Glacier National Park the following year. Dorwart said he could have stayed at the national park for longer, but he missed seeing country for miles.

“Up in the mountains in that country, you couldn’t see anything past the trees unless you were above the tree line,” Dorwart said. “I just got to the point where I wanted to get out and see country for a long distance.”

After leaving Glacier National Park, Dorwart worked on different ranches all across Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska and the Dakotas.

“I would work somewhere for a while,” Dorwart said. “Then, I would think that maybe I wanted to see some different country and go find another place to work.”

Dorwart said he experienced difficult times, but he thought working for these ranches was a great opportunity overall.

“I worked on small outfits where I had to work on fence and climb windmills,” Dorwart said, “But, I also worked on big outfits, where I just drew riding wages. That was where I really wanted to be anyways.”

Dorwart worked at several ranches including TA Ranch in

Continued on page 32

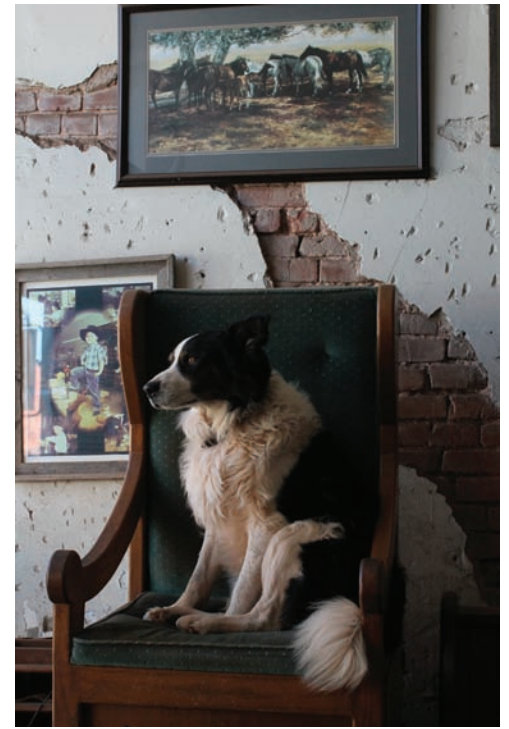


PHOTO DETAILS

Top to bottom, Raymond Dorwart believes there is a need for boot makers. Dorwart's son's dog, Buddy sits in a shoe shine stand while Dorwart works. The shop of Dorwart Custom Cow-Boy Boots is filled sentimental items, including these boots.

In April 1997, Dorwart moved his shop to the current location across from the original Oklahoma State Capitol Publishing Company in Guthrie, Okla. Dorwart has more than 700 pairs of boot lasts, two of which date back to Gus Blucher, a custom bootmaker out of Cheyenne, Wyo., in 1915. (Photos by Laci Jones)

ENDEAVOR TO PERSEVERE

Wyoming. The ranch owned nearly 50 sections and leased another 52 sections about 87 miles from the home ranch, he said.

"They put me in a camp there, and I had just about 3,300 head of two-year-olds that I was riding," Dorwart said.

When he rode through that section of land, it was about 40 miles from his camp to the backside of the pasture. Dorwart cut through a neighbor's land, located on a natural barrier with a mountain ridge to save time.

"I could save myself about seven miles if I cut across a neighbor's land, come back on the top side and drop down in my camp," Dorwart explained.

One day in June '82, he was riding across the side of a mountain. He said the ridge was made up of little rock and the creek beds were narrow and deep. His horse stepped over the front side of the creek bed and his right rear did not make the otherside. The horse dropped down.

"Like any good cowboy, I was going to ride him back up," Dorwart said. "He was laid down on his right side on my leg, and I determined the horse was not going to get up unless I got off of him."

Dorwart said he switched his reins from his left hand to his right hand. In doing so, he dropped the right reins. He was able to slightly pull his leg out from under the horse when the horse rolled.

"The horse rolled enough that I got pulled out, and I swung my left leg over," Dorwart said. "He stood up, and I hung my spur, and I had a catch rope tied behind my canteen."

Dorwart hung his spur in the

rope and stood on his tip-toes. Each time Dorwart would start to move, he fell down and pulled the horse back over on top of him. After the third time, Dorwart flipped a loop of the reins over the horse's nose.

The horse finally stood up and his foot had come loose, he explained. He was lying on the ground when the horse stood up on his hind legs, pivoted over and came down on Dorwart's chest.

"In that instant, I knew I was going to die," Dorwart said. "You hear people say that their lives flash before their eyes. Well, mine didn't."

Instead, Dorwart said he began to float up the ridge toward a large being with a big beard wearing a long white robe and a turban. His arms were crossed and his hands were tucked into his sleeves, he added.

"The closer I got to him, the more I could see that he wasn't looking at me," Dorwart said. "The being was looking back down the hill. I get to him and look at him. Then, I turn around, and I could see myself lying underneath that horse."

Dorwart said he was sure God sent one of His angels to bring him to heaven, even though he was not a follower of Jesus Christ. He added he did not know how much time had passed, but the next thing he remembered was seeing the blue sky above him.

With a split sternum, three broken ribs and three cracked ribs, Dorwart mounted his horse and rode back down to camp. Dorwart said the near-death experience led him to church and eventually a relationship with his Lord and Savior.

Not long after his accident, Dorwart became determined to make a change within his life. Dorwart's friend, Kenneth Mintling came to visit him in Wyoming for two weeks.

"We would sit in the evening and talk about things," Dorwart said. "I kept thinking and talking about what I wanted to do different and he says, 'You ought to go learn how to build cowboy boots.'"

Dorwart had some leather experience using an old, small sewing machine. He created and repaired leather materials for himself and people he worked with.

"So, I had some leather understanding, which was of no use for building boots," Dorwart said with a chuckle.

Dorwart paid a bootmaker, who lived in Utah to teach him how to build boots. He opened his own shop back in his birthplace later that year.

Early on, Dorwart met Jay Griffith, owner of Griffith Blucher Boot Company in Fairfax, Okla. Dorwart made a phone call on a Wednesday afternoon to Griffith for advice on French calf leather.

"It turned into a 45-minute conversation," Dorwart said. "Eventually he says, 'Why don't you come down to Fairfax, and I will show you around.'"

Dorwart drove to Fairfax the following day. He spent about 10 days there and watched Griffith's 20 employees work in the back of the shop.

Griffith and Dorwart kept in contact for several years. For several years after his visit, Griffith tried convincing Dorwart to come work for him. Griffith eventually sold his interest out of Fairfax and

moved to Guthrie, and Dorwart came to work for him, he said.

"When I came here in the beginning, I thought I would be there about two years at the most," Dorwart said. "I thought there were way too many people and too many trees."

Dorwart said he worked for Griffith off and on for several years. He later moved in with a saddle maker down the street from Griffith's boot shop. In April 1997, Dorwart moved his shop to the current location across from the original Oklahoma State Capitol Publishing Company in Guthrie, Okla.

"This building was a warehouse with a corrugated tin front and an overhead garage door," Dorwart said. "It's a neat building."

He said the building has since been renovated and filled with sentimental items.

"Most of it isn't worth anything," Dorwart added, "but somebody gave [each item] to me, and I look at them and like it."

Among the items are the second pair of boots he built, old boot-making books and several paintings. He also believes there is always a need for boot makers.

"It sounds kind of goofy, but there is plenty of business for boot makers," Dorwart said.

The boot making industry is a difficult business to get into, he added. His final piece of advice for future boot makers comes from the classic 1976 movie *The Outlaw Josey Wales* starring Clint Eastwood.

"You have to endeavor to persevere," Dorwart said. "Learn all you can, use the best material you can, and endeavor to persevere."*



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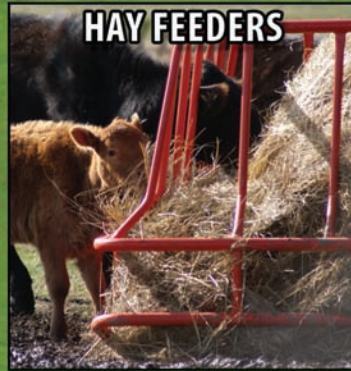
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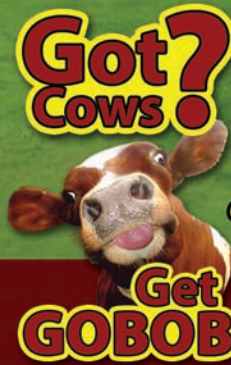
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Rory Plaid Infinity
Scarf Brown



After the holiday season comes to an end, it is a good idea to revamp the basic pieces you already own. When I am throwing together pieces from my closet, I always hope that they create a statement when I enter a room. Whether it is a date night, workday or the extra boost needed to face a Monday, your outfit can give you the necessary confidence to take on any event. This allows you to create new, refreshed looks without having to spend money on an entire new outfit at a store. Purchasing a unique hat, scarf or accessory can turn the items you already own into a new outfit that lets your personality shine. I try to find a print I like or a color that accentuates my eyes or hair. These small touches can pull the whole look together.



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15 servings

Ingredients

- 7-10 russet potatoes
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 sticks of butter
- 1 pound Velveeta cheese
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Peel potatoes and place in large pot of boiling water. Boil until potatoes are soft, about an hour. Drain water but leave potatoes in pot. Mash potatoes until they are a good, even consistency. Add in other ingredients, make sure to cube the cheese so it will melt faster. Continue mashing until everything is combined evenly. Stir some more medium low heat until all is melted. Taste test to make sure you don't need more butter, cheese or salt and pepper.



PECAN PIE BARS

20-30 servings

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup of butter
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup dark corn syrup
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Crust:

Mix 1 1/2 cups flour and 2 tablespoons light brown sugar; cut in 1/2 cup butter with pastry cutter. Place parchment paper in a 11 by 7-inch pan, and press crust mixture in so it covers the bottom of the pan. Bake at 375 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 minutes. Set aside.

Filling:

Beat eggs slightly; stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over baked layer and bake for 25 minutes at 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Cool until pecan layer is slightly firm before cutting. ★

How Ringling came to be



When you hear the word “Ringling,” do you think of the Ringling Brothers Circus? You probably do, unless you live in or near the south-central Oklahoma town of Ringling in Jefferson County. However, there is a connection.

To understand the dynamics that led to the founding of the town of Ringling, we must go back to the days of Indian Territory, when the south-central part was the Chickasaw Nation.

Because of the demand for beef in the North in the late 1860s, ranchers spilled into the area to take advantage of the unassigned lands and certain allotments available for good grazing. Men like Lute Jackson, the Stallings broth-

ers, John Cornish, Alex Hammonds, P.B. Turner and others were to play a part in the history of Ringling and the surrounding area.

The little community of Cornish, named for John Cornish, was established by 1891 one-mile south of present day Ringling. It began as an Indian trading post and stopping place for pioneers. It soon boasted a drug store, post office, cotton gin, newspaper, wagon yard, schools, churches and even an IOOF Lodge along with several other stores.

Meanwhile, over in Lawton, which was established in 1901, a young lawyer named Jake Hamon dreamed of a railroad that would connect Lawton and Ardmore to

the east. He set out to promote the project, eventually moving his office to Ardmore. Hamon and others obtained a charter from the state (Oklahoma attained statehood in 1907) and hoped to build as far west as Denver, but they needed capital.

Stories vary as to how Hamon met John Ringling, one of the six Ringling brothers who owned the Ringling Brothers Circus.

Whatever the true circumstances of their meeting, Hamon engaged Ringling in conversation about building a railroad, and Ringling was game enough to investigate further. At the time, he was looking for a place to establish winter headquarters for **See RINGLING page 39**



BY JUDY WADE

PHOTO DETAILS

Ringling’s welcome sign reflects the circus’s importance in the town. (Photo by Judy Wade)

Ringling

the circus.

The Ringling railroad, to be eventually known as the Oklahoma, New Mexico and Pacific began materializing. On Nov. 25, 1912, Lawton approved the contract for a line between Ardmore and Lawton to be completed by Dec. 13, 1913. Construction began May 1, 1913.

Hamon and Ringling began looking for a town site, and Ringling chose one from the map with the tap of his cane. The pair bought all but 10 acres of the P.B. Turner Farm. Turner kept the 10 acres for his own home.

In the meantime, more settlers who were to play roles in the town had poured into the area: Toss and Ellen Engram, J.H. Morris, Floyd Allen and his brother, Luther Allen. Toss Engram said he baled hay where Ringling now stands, and Floyd Allen later became Mayor of the town.

By August 1913, track was being laid, and a big celebration was held in Ardmore with Governor Lee Cruse driving the first spike. By the first week of January 1914, the Oklahoma, New Mexico and Pacific Railroad was stretching westward.

Two things happened that would change the destiny of the railroad and the town of Ringling. First, John Ringling discovered that the climate in southern Oklahoma was not suitable for winter headquarters for the circus animals. Second, oil was discovered in the area. Carter, Jefferson, Stephens and Comanche counties began "leading the world" in petroleum production. The railroad veered north to present-day Healdton to accommodate the need for transportation to the oil fields and then back west.

A town was platted, and Hamon said, "Call it Ringling for the man who made it possible." In 1914, Ringling became an official town,



Ringling celebrated its 100th birthday in 2014 with beautiful murals commemorating its history painted on buildings on Main Street. Photo courtesy of The Ringling Eagle.

just north of the junction of U.S. HWY 70 and SH 89. It was a boomtown, with buildings shooting up and the population soaring. Pine buildings, "shotgun" houses and tents were thrown up first. In less than a month, there were 40 substantial buildings finished or under construction. One of which was a 40 room hotel.

In May 1914, the railroad was extended into Ringling, but never went farther west. It had all the business it could handle. By June, 40 to 60 freight cars were unloaded daily at Wilson and Ringling, each carrying 30 to 50 tons of freight. Until then, 1,500 teams and wagons had worked out of Ringling hauling freight over muddy and rutted roads. The train arrived twice a day and many people turned out to see it come in. About 10 taxis met the train and took people on to other destinations.

By the third or fourth month of its existence, about half of the business district was categorized as entertainment—shows, gambling houses, pool halls, bootleggers and honky tonks with "dime a dance girls."

The oil companies paid on

the 10th of each month, and men were in the streets 24 hours a day: drillers, roustabouts, tool pushers changing towers, roughnecks, teamsters in oil soaked boots and overalls, men looking for work and diversion. At first, there were few women as life was rugged in the oil fields, but the number increased as time went on.

The First State Bank was organized, and a doctor opened his office. The Cornish News became The Ringling News and other Cornish businesses moved to Ringling. A big pecan crop in Jefferson County in 1914 provided work for men unable to get jobs in the oil field. Ten cars of pecans were shipped out of Ringling that year, along with 10 to 12 tank cars of oil daily. It was one of the liveliest towns in the state.

Telephone service, electricity and gas were soon to follow. In 1915, the Cornish bank moved to Ringling as the First National Bank with W.W. Woodworth, A.C. Swinney and E.C. Garner as officers. John Ringling became sole owner of the railroad and rural mail delivery was begun. A new water tower was built in 1915 and remains the oldest water tower in

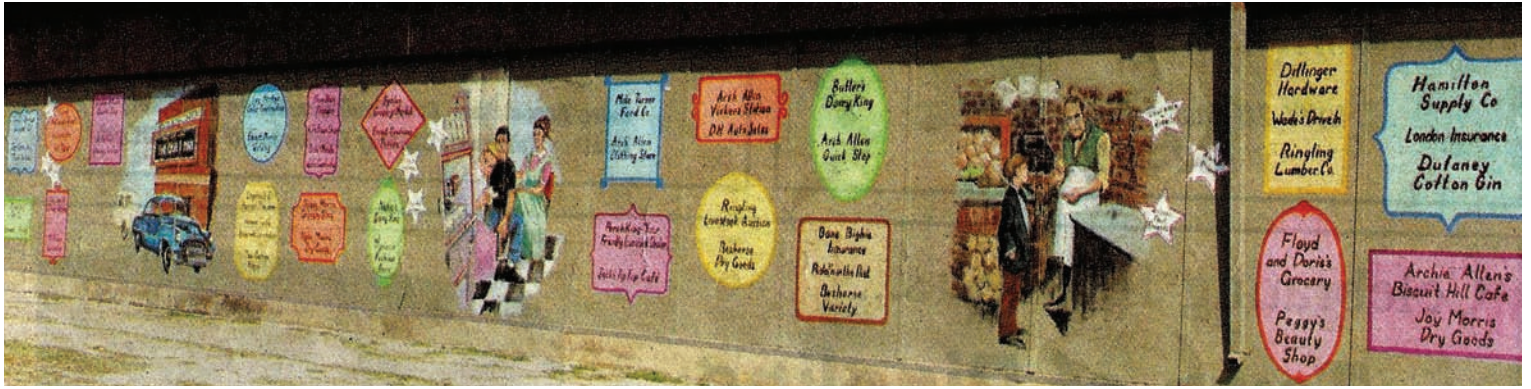
the state still in use.

As Ringling grew, Cornish began to decline as businesses and residents moved to the new town.

Besides the usual problems of a boomtown, Ringling had others. On June 16, 1916, a fire broke out causing \$5,000 in damages. In July 1917, a second fire caused \$85,000 in damages.

The community also survived drought in 1915 and in the 1950s, WWI and WWII, the Great Depression and the diminishing oil industry. Then the town began to decline. The railroad sold several times, and the train made its final trip to Ringling on Dec. 21, 1979.

Today, Ringling has a population of about 1,250, and is a thriving agricultural area with businesses located on U.S. HWY 70 and historic Main Street. It has numerous churches and a school well-known for its academics and sports. The Gleason Public Library is now housed where the original First National Bank stood. The Ringling Eagle, once operated by Leon Gleason for over 35 years, is still on Main Street. The town has **See TOWN page 40**



One of the murals painted on a building on Main Street shows vintage businesses in Ringling. (Courtesy of The Ringling Eagle)

Town

Continued from page 39

a new Post Office, a new Community Center, a swimming pool and a public park.

Ringling celebrated its 100th birthday in 2014 in grand fashion, with a great slate of activities. A welcome by Mayor Terri Blackwell, parade, unveiling of a Centennial Monument dedicated to the early settlers, tours of the library, games in the street, vendors and two nights of rodeo were just some of the fun

events. Beautiful murals commemorating its history painted on buildings on Main Street were ready for viewing.

What makes Ringling a great place to live? According to City Councilwoman Cathy Tomberlin, "It's a friendly little town. When something happens, everyone joins together to help them." She cited fund raisers bringing in thousands of dollars to help five recently

diagnosed cancer patients.

Ringling has not forgotten the circus that caused it to come into existence, and the circus has not forgotten Ringling. When the Ringling Brothers Circus performed twice in Oklahoma City, one day was proclaimed "Ringling Day at the Circus," and everyone in town was invited to go to the circus free and be the honored guests.*

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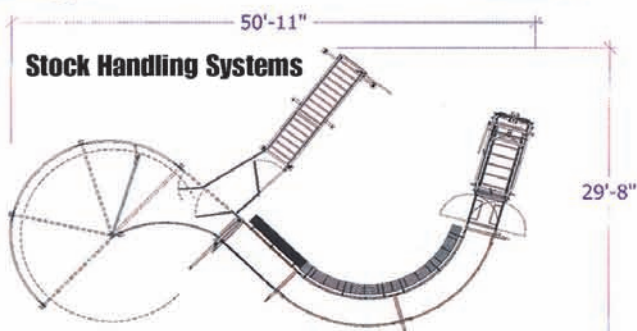


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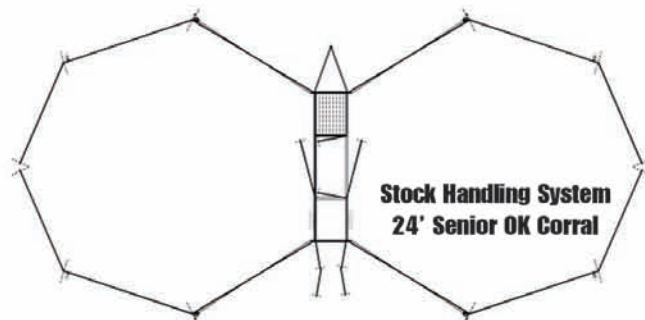
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Norman, Oklahoma Chocolate Festival

Close your eyes. Open your mouth. Now, put your taste buds to work. It has a smooth, creamy texture that slowly melts over your entire tongue. You pick up all sorts of flavor notes: bitter, sweet, salty, spicy and fruity. It's completely delectable. The rich, smooth, dessert-like taste leaves you completely satisfied, but somehow wanting more. Chocolate. Definitely chocolate. You would know it anywhere.

Chocolate lovers from near and far gathered in Norman, Okla., on Jan. 30 for the annual Chocolate Festival, put on by the Firehouse Art Center [FAC], which has been in business since 1971. It is operated out of a vacated fire station and is home to professional working visual art studios. In addition, they house a dedicated

exhibition gallery, host youth and adult art education programs, and put on several community events. The Chocolate Festival serves as a fundraiser to support one of the FAC's top priorities: funding art education in the Norman community and Norman public schools.

The festival, currently in its 34th year, is an exciting, community-centered fundraiser, said Emily Smart, Graphic Designer and Development Assistant at the FAC. It is the firehouse's only fundraiser and the premiere chocolate-inspired food festival in the region.

"For over thirty years, local restaurants, bakeries and businesses have supported the Firehouse by donating samples of their best chocolate-inspired treats for this fundraiser," Smart said. "Ticketed attendees choose samples from

these vendors and participate in the free art activities taking place during the event."

Nearly 30 vendors attended this year's festival including Amy Cakes, Apple Tree Chocolate, Bedré Fine Chocolate, Chocolate Fountains of Oklahoma, La Baguette Bakery & Café, McNellies Pub & Grill, Rusty's Custard Company, SAM's Club, Sprouts, The Diner and many more. Thousands of delicious chocolate-inspired treats from the partnering businesses were offered to over 2,000 attendees in the ballroom of the Marriott Conference Center at the NCED.

"Ticket holders get to enjoy so many amazing samples in one place from businesses normally located across the state," Smart said. "[All] while supporting the See **CHOCOLATE** page 43



**BY AMANDA
MARTIN**

PHOTO DETAILS

The annual Chocolate Festival, hosted by the Firehouse Art Center on Jan. 30, celebrated its 34th year. (Photo courtesy of Scott Cox)

Chocolate

FAC's visual arts education program at the same time."

Amy Cakes, a Norman based bakery, is excited to have participated in the Chocolate Festival for the tenth year in a row.

"Amy is a huge supporter of the arts," said Scott Cox, Office Manager at Amy Cakes. "She believes that everyone needs more beauty and creativity in their lives to live and love more deeply.

"She herself is full of creativity and is glad everyday she is able to create something unique and delicious to help our sweet clients celebrate life's moments. As a small business, we love giving back to the community that has given so much to us."

The Amy Cakes crew prepared mini decadent chocolate fudge cupcakes, iced in chocolate butter cream for this year's event. Cox said they love the sense of community in Norman, as well as at the festival, and would never miss the opportunity to rub elbows with other small businesses and fellow Norman citizens.

Apple Tree Chocolate, another local Norman company, returned to the Chocolate Festival for their second year. They offered guests a variety of chocolate covered apples such as apple pie, milk chocolate and dark chocolate sea salt.

"The feedback [at the Chocolate Festival] is great," said Scotty Jackson, owner of Apple Tree Chocolate. "We reach a different demographic than what we see in the store. We see people's responses and reactions first hand and gain new customers who had never heard of us before."

Apple Tree Chocolate was excited to return to the Chocolate Festival and defend their title of best chocolate sample. Jackson said the winning title is only worth bragging rights, but it's still fun.



Proceeds from the Chocolate Festival directly support the Firehouse Art Center's visual arts education programs as well as providing quality visual arts education, experiences and exhibits to the Norman community. (Photo courtesy of Scott Cox)

After picking up samples, attendees proceeded to the venue's cafeteria to enjoy live music or take part in "Festival Arts Day," a special area offering a variety of free art activities. It is meant to help build awareness of the visual arts and arts education in the Norman community.

"It's the perfect place for families to express their creativity," said Smart.

This year, Festival Arts Day featured foil sculpting for both adults and children, as well as "Creative Cube" painting for kids,

both of which are free of charge and do not require tickets.

"FAC faculty and instructors were on hand to demonstrate and assist with the activities," Smart said. "[They] discussed the children's and adult's art education programs offered at the Firehouse Art Center and at local elementary schools."

According to Smart, proceeds from the Chocolate Festival directly support the FAC's visual arts education programs, much like those at Festival Arts Day, as well as providing quality visual

arts education, experiences and exhibits to the Norman community.

"It doesn't get much better than having delicious treats and supporting the arts at the same time!" said Smart.

Whether you fancy chocolate, the arts, or both, the Chocolate Festival is the ideal event for a date, a girl's day, or some family fun. Participants support the community, local businesses and art education all while learning about the arts and satisfying their chocolate craving. ★

EVENT LINEUP

FEBRUARY-MARCH

FEB 01 **TULSA BOAT, SPORT & TRAVEL SHOW**, River Spirit Expo Center at Expo Square. Tulsa, OK 74112. The 60th Annual Tulsa Boat, Sport & Travel Show on Feb. 1-7 will feature boats, RVs and recreational accessories, plus plenty of family fun and food. Come see hundreds of boats including fishing boats, cruisers, ski boats, pontoons, personal watercraft and more. Learn about the latest trends in health and fitness, outdoor living concepts and outdoor recreation. Visit www.tulsaboatshow.com for more information.

FEB 04 **CHOCOLATE DECADENCE ON AUTOMOBILE ALLEY**, Hudson Essex Building. Oklahoma City 73102. Head to Automobile Alley in Oklahoma City for Chocolate Decadence, an evening full of delicious chocolate treats, gourmet coffee and more. Dress to impress and sip champagne while listening to smooth jazz and bidding on items in the Valentine auction. Get your ticket now at www.chocolatedecadenceokc.com and celebrate Valentine's Day early at this chocolate festival in Automobile Alley.

FEB 06 **EAGLE TOUR & LOON WATCH**, Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge & Tenkiller State Park. Vian, OK 74962. Come to the Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge on Feb. 6 for a tour featuring southern bald eagles on the nest. Participants begin the tour by watching eagles from the refuge's webcam and continue the tour on the 25-person tour bus. Stops will be made at two nesting sites as well as other points of interest where eagles are known to be viewed. Come out and enjoy this famed bird of the northeast and beyond. Tours will occur unless there is a travel advisory for the area. Call **918-489-5641** for additional watch dates.

FEB 06 **TULSA HERITAGE RODEO**, Tulsa Expo Center. Tulsa, OK 74114. Head to Expo Square to experience the excitement of the Tulsa Heritage Rodeo. See cowboys and cowgirls compete in rodeo events like bare back riding, ranch bronc riding, tie down roping, steer wrestling, ladies barrel racing, team roping and bull riding. Even the smallest cowpokes get in on the action with mutton busting. Don't miss this fun event.

FEB 06 **YUKON CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL**, Robertson Activity Center. Yukon, OK. Satisfy your sweet tooth and get ready for an afternoon of chocolate treats at the Yukon Chocolate Festival. A wide variety of assorted chocolate will be served by local businesses and groups. The Yukon Chocolate Festival also includes a silent auction. Purchase a general admission ticket to this year's Yukon Chocolate Festival and feast on your choice of six chocolate samples. Call **405-350-8937** for more information.

FEB 10

PRAIRIE CLASSIC QUARTER HORSE SHOW, Oklahoma State Fair Park. Oklahoma City. Grab your cowboy hat and slip on your boots for the Prairie Classic Quarter Horse Show on Feb. 10-14. Riders of all ages will compete in a wide variety of performance styles and activities including Western riding, reining, working hunter, equitation over fences and much more. Come see what these beautiful horses can do at the Super Barn in Oklahoma City.

FEB 12

OKLAHOMA HORSE FAIR, Stephens County Fair & Expo Center. Duncan, OK. The annual Oklahoma Horse Fair is a two-day horse event starting Feb. 12 that includes a trail horse and ranch horse competition followed by a working cow dog competition. More than 200 ranch and performance horses will be offered for sale at auction on Saturday. More than 50 vendors will be selling Western tack and decor, handmade bits, spurs, jewelry, art and crafts, Western wear, hats and livestock feed. Join horse buyers, sellers, trade show merchants and general horse enthusiasts at the Oklahoma Horse Fair and make your way through Stallion Avenue and the Western trade show. Visit www.okhorsefair.com for more information on the Oklahoma Horse Fair.



**FEB
12**

SUNDOWNER STOCK DOG ASSOCIATION TRIAL, Duncan, OK. Sundowner Stock Dog Association will be hosting a trial in Duncan, OK. Call for open dogs is Feb. 1. For more information on the cattle dog trial contact Rita Shinn at 903-217-9907.

**FEB
13**

OKLAHOMA STOCK DOG SALE, Duncan, OK. The sale will be held conjunction with the Oklahoma Horse Fair in Duncan at approximately 5 p.m. Saturday, February 13. We will be taking up to 10 dogs for the sale. Call **580-465-8727** for more information.

**FEB
16**

ALBRECHT/PENZ PRESIDENT'S DAY ANGUS BULL & FEMALE SALE, President's Day Angus Bull & Female Sale, Clay Freeney Ranch. Caddo, OK. For more information, visit www.albrechtranchangus.com.

**FEB
18**

OKMULGEE COUNTY SPRING JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW, Okmulgee County Fairgrounds. Okmulgee, OK. Come out to the Okmulgee County Junior Livestock Show and support local youth as they exhibit their animals and projects on Feb. 18-20. A premium sale will be Feb. 23.

**FEB
20**

2016 LOGAN COUNTY SPRING JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW, Logan County Fairgrounds. Guthrie, OK. Support the local Logan County 4-H and FFA students as they exhibit their show animals on Feb. 20-23. For more information, contact haley.n.rosson@okstate.edu or call the extension office at **405-282-3331**.

**FEB
26**

TEXOMA CATTLEMEN'S CONFERENCE, Ardmore Convention Center. Ardmore, OK 73401 The U.S. cattle industry leads the rest of the world in science and technology innovations, and cattle producers have been rewarded through strategically adopting innovation. Registration and Trade Show start at 8 a.m. For more information, visit www.noble.org/events.



BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE WORKSHOP

**FEB
26**

BACKWOODS HUNTING & FISHING EXPO, Oklahoma State Fair Park. Oklahoma City. The Backwoods Hunting & Fishing Expo is a large, three-day show that will appeal to anyone who loves the great outdoors, including experienced hunters and fishermen, as well as novices. Bring the whole family and participate in several youth and adult competitions and contests. Visit www.backwoodsshow.com.

**MAR
01**

POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY JUNIOR LIVESTOCK SHOW, Heart of Oklahoma Exposition Center. Shawnee, OK. Come out and support the local county youth March 1-4 at the 2016 Pottawatomie Junior Livestock Show.

**MAR
04**

TIMED EVENT CHAMPIONSHIP, Lazy E Arena. Guthrie, OK 73044. Witness as Guthrie's Lazy E Arena plays host to the Timed Event Championship on March 4-6, an annual event that features the top 20 PRCA cowboys in the world competing for the world championship title of "World's Best All-Around Timed Event Cowboy." The Timed Event Championship is one of the most prestigious events in professional rodeo and will include three days and five performances of competition.

**MAR
04**

WATONGA TROUT DERBY, Roman Nose State Park. Watonga, OK 73772. Bring your favorite fishing pole on March 4-5 and try your hand at catching trout for cash and prizes. A total of 100 tagged trout will be released into the lake in addition to the normal trout stocking; each caught tagged trout will be a winner of cash or prizes. Register for the Watonga Trout Derby at www.watonga-chamber.com.

**MAR
08**

BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE WORKSHOP, Noble Foundation Kruse Auditorium. Ardmore, OK 73401. This one-day workshop will give insight into BQA standards for animal care, record keeping, nutrition and carcass quality. Participants can become BQA-certified with successful completion of the workshop and a test. For more information, visit www.noble.org/events.

**MAR
09**

OKLAHOMA YOUTH EXPO, Oklahoma State Fairgrounds. Come out to the World's Largest Junior Livestock Show on March 9-18 to support Oklahoma's youth as they exhibit their FFA and 4-H projects. For more information and a full schedule, visit www.okyouthexpo.com.

COOPERTON COUNTRY DANCE



When you think of a prototypical dance hall, you may envision young wallflowers struggling to walk across the floor to request a dance from their crush. You will not find that scenario at the Cooperton Multi-Purpose Center.

As you walk into the center, you are met with dozens of photos of senior couples. Images of the happy couples line bulletin boards along the south wall of the facility. Faces from all walks of life peer out of the photos. From women with white hair to bald men wearing baseball caps, couples pose with their heads tilted toward each other. In one photo, a weathered man held his arm protectively around a woman with short, white curls and a round, wrinkled face. These couples, 61 in total, married after meeting at the Cooperton Country

Dance. Looking for friendship and socialization, these couples found companionship and more as they attended the weekly dance held in the sleepy, southwest Oklahoma town of Cooperton.

Every Saturday night, the town of Cooperton, population seven, comes alive as visitors from across the state and north Texas gather in the Cooperton Multi-Purpose Center to eat a good meal, visit with old friends and dance the night away. For the past 24 years, the Cooperton Country Dance has drawn interest from as far away as Wichita Falls, Texas, and Cheyenne, Okla.

The dance began in 1974 as a local Square Dance Club, made up of couples who wanted a place that offered wholesome fun on the weekends. As the club grew, members began looking for a larger location to hold

dances. Cooperton town officials, who were also members of the Square Dance Club, gave the old Cooperton school bus barn to the dancers.

Kenneth Boyd, coordinator of the Cooperton Country Dance, and his wife Arlene persuaded other community members to renovate the old bus barn. They worked day and night to remodel the building in 30 days. Along with fundraisers, generous donations from surrounding communities helped complete the job.

Listening to the echo of the hardwood floor, Boyd recalled how the Cordell Public School donated the maple flooring. Removing the old gym floor turned out to be a more difficult job than they had anticipated due to the location of the gym, but they tackled the job with youthful vigor, removing **See DANCE page 47**



BY STACI MAUNEY

prestigeprrose@gmail.com

PHOTO DETAILS

The dance hall is reminiscent of an old country home, decked out with lights, a bear skin, a hawk, elk horns, a bleached steer skull and wagon wheels. (Photo by Staci Mauney)

all of the flooring in one day. A church in Chickasha, Okla., donated heaters and air conditioners. By the time the 30-day deadline for completion rolled around, they had completely restored the facility without going into debt. One hundred fifty people attended the grand opening.

After the Square Dance Club disbanded due to dwindling attendance, the renovated dance hall stood empty. In 1991, the Wichita Valley Boys, a five-piece band, started playing on Saturday nights, signaling the beginning of the weekly country dance. Only one original band member remains with the group, but they continue to play 24 years later. Even today, as visitors approach the center, they can hear the whine of the steel guitar and the steady rhythm of the drums.

On the first Saturday of each month, visitors gather at the dance hall to celebrate good friends and fellowship. Boyd coordinates a different meal each month, ranging from a wild hog barbecue to a Hawaiian luau. However, his favorite is homemade ice cream in July. As the judge, he samples each entry. During the rest of the month, guests bring a dish for a potluck dinner.

At Christmas, Boyd hangs twinkling, multi-colored lights from one end of the dance hall to the other, and he strategically places mistletoe for couples looking to sneak a kiss. On New Year's, the smell of black-eyed peas and cornbread wafts into the dance hall to entice visitors to enjoy a traditional southern meal. Couples are celebrated at Valentine's Day with a sweetheart dance. On these special occasions, approximately 80 people attend, up from their average of 60 per week.

Over the years, Boyd has heard many compliments about the individuality of their dance hall and the location in Cooperton.



As member numbers of the Square Dance Club grew, a larger location was needed to hold dances. Cooperton town officials gave the old Cooperton school bus barn to the dancers. (Photo by Staci Mauney)

From the atmosphere to the decorations to “the best dance floor in southwest Oklahoma,” Boyd believes each of these plays a role in convincing people to travel to Cooperton, 25 miles from the nearest town. The event is family-friendly, and alcohol and smoke-free, all reasons that people enjoy coming to this venue.

“We have good music for good people,” Boyd said. “This is a unique place.”

Families with children as young as four attend the dance on a regular basis. Fathers pass on their country heritage to their daughters by teaching the two-step. The young-at-heart continue to make this a regular stop on

their weekly schedule, greeting old friends, making new ones and possibly falling in love.

Over the years, Boyd helped the facility expand through a series of grants. A large, fully-equipped kitchen for community dinners, two handicap-accessible restrooms and concrete pavilions have been added. The decorations, except for the Cooperton school pictures, are items Boyd has purchased or collected over the years. The dance hall is reminiscent of an old country home, decked out with lights, a bear skin, a hawk, elk horns, a bleached steer skull and wagon wheels.

In addition to the weekly dance, the Cooperton Multi-Purpose

Center is also used for a variety of events including funerals, weddings, baby showers, farm auctions, school and family reunions, and birthday and anniversary parties.

The dance is rarely cancelled—only occasionally when ice coats the road. Boyd recalls that one time the dance was not held for two consecutive Saturday nights when an ice storm knocked out the power. The Cooperton Country Dance is an anchor for southwestern Oklahoma and brings people from this small community and surrounding areas together as they enjoy food, friendship and fun every Saturday night throughout the year. ★

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Grazing Oklahoma

Tall Fescue

Characteristics: Tall fescue is an introduced cool-season perennial grass. It grows about 19 to 48 inches tall and sometimes has rhizomes. Tall fescue was brought to the U.S. from Europe during the late 1800s. Fescue grows best at an average temperature above 45 degrees Fahrenheit. It grows very little when average temperatures fall below 34 degrees Fahrenheit or rise above 84 degrees Fahrenheit. Tall fescue is found in a wide variety of soils but grows best in loam or clay soils and will not tolerate deep sands.

Area of Importance: Tall fescue has expanded in popularity since 1940 to now be the most common introduced grass in the country. It is most prevalent in the eastern U.S. and the eastern third of Oklahoma and Texas. The climate is usually too dry for fescue throughout most of the western U.S.

Attributes: Tall fescue can be a desirable forage species for cattle and is highest in quality from September to May. Because of this, many grazing managers

utilize fescue for fall, winter and spring grazing. A residual height of at least four inches is recommended during the summer to avoid losing a stand. Although it can be a desirable forage species, fescue can cause a decrease in cattle performance due to a fungal endophyte that commonly infects the plant.

Infected plants are referred to as endophyte-infected or E+. Endophyte concentrations are highest in the seed heads. The endophyte will produce an alkaloid that, while beneficial to the plant, is responsible for causing fescue toxicosis in cattle.

The main symptoms found in cattle due to fescue toxicosis are poor circulation to extremities (causing loss of feet, ears and/or tail), fat necrosis, elevated body temperature, rough hair coat, reduced feed intake (causing poor gains or weight loss), poor conception rates, abortions, reduced milk production and poor calf survival.

These toxic effects can be managed by:

1. Diluting the effect by inter-

seeding the stand with legumes.

2. Diluting the effect by feeding hay that is not E+ tall fescue or by feeding a grain supplement.

3. Avoiding excessive nitrogen applications as this tends to increase alkaloid levels.

4. Avoiding grazing E+ tall fescue during the summer and late spring.

5. Trying to keep tall fescue vegetative to avoid grazing seed heads, and mowing off seed heads before grazing again in the fall.

Endophyte-free tall fescue (E-) varieties have been established. Cattle grazing E- plants have increased performance compared to grazing E+ plants. However, E-tall fescue stands have decreased stand persistence due to endophyte removal.

Naturally occurring endophytes that do not produce the toxic alkaloid have been identified and are available in fescue varieties from commercial sources. These are referred to as Novel E+ tall fescue varieties. Novel E+ plants do not cause fescue toxicosis but have similar stand persistence to traditional E+ plants. ★



BY ROB COOK

rwcook@noble.org

PHOTO DETAILS

Tall fescue can be a desirable forage species for cattle and is highest in quality from September to May. This cool-season perennial grass has expanded in popularity since 1940 to now be the most common introduced grass in the country. (Photo courtesy of The Noble Foundation)

THE RISE OF THE QUAIL



Quail hunting is a long-standing tradition in Oklahoma. Unfortunately, many Oklahomans have seen fewer quail in the state throughout the past few decades.

“The decline has been throughout the United States with different species of quail,” said Scott Cox, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation senior upland game biologist.

However, quail numbers have been on the rise in recent years in Oklahoma, according to Cox.

Two quail species reside in Oklahoma: northern bobwhite and scaled. The scaled quail is mainly found in the panhandle and the extreme western part of the state, while the northern bobwhite is

found statewide.

The scaled quail, also known as blue quail, can be identified by its pale gray plumage. This medium-sized bird has a bushy white crest and a scaled pattern over its neck, chest and belly.

The northern bobwhite quail are small and plump. The males are chestnut, brown and white with a white throat and black plumage on their head. Similar to the males, the female northern bobwhite is a reddish color with a buffy throat and eyebrow.

“When we did research in the ‘90s, it was thought that quail stayed within a 40-acre area their whole life,” Cox said.

Cox and other researchers with ODWC and Oklahoma State Uni-

versity tracked quail as technology advanced. Using radio transmitters, the researchers found that quail move several miles in the spring and fall shuffles. Spring shuffle is the period where the birds come out of their coveys in the spring, he explained.

The fall shuffle is when birds mix and match coveys after nesting season. This usually occurs from mid-September to mid to late November. Birds in the fall have been recorded by radio-collaring to move several miles, three to 50 miles to be exact, he added.

“The males will move a little bit farther in the spring,” Cox said. “But, it is not uncommon for the hens to move as far as 15 to 20 miles.”

See QUAIL page 51



BY LACI JONES

editor@okfronline.com

PHOTO DETAILS

Research has shown quail will have an average of two-and-a-half male contributors per nest and will nest from May to October. (Courtesy photo)

QUAIL

miles sometimes.”

Cox said many different dynamics have impacted quail numbers including dramatic changes to the environment. Beginning in the '70s, urban expansion, small farms going out of production and the introduction of exotic grasses caused quail numbers to decline, he said.

“The biggest decline by far has been the habitat factor,” Cox said. “Quail are getting on islands in some parts of the state.”

Quail are a shrub forb native-grass obligate, he said. Quail require a mixture of grasses, weeds and shrubs.

“To have good numbers of quail like we did this year in the western part of Oklahoma, they have to have large expansions of native grasses and shrub components quail can utilize,” Cox said.

Quail favor Oklahoma-native grasses including little bluestem, big bluestem, switchgrass and Indian grass. The grasses are mixed with weeds like ragweed, sunflower and pigweeds as well as small, mid-range shrubs like sand plums, skunkbrush and wild rose.

“The worst thing for quail is a monoculture of grasses,” he explained. “They require a lot of diversity for their diet and for thermal cover and nesting cover.”

Farmers and ranchers across the state spray for weeds and introduce new grasses, Cox explained.

For example, farmers and ranchers are planting Bermuda grass and fescue for cattle grazing or hay in the northeast part of the state, Cox explained. However, this is also a problem statewide, he added. The western part of the state does not have the Bermuda grass or fescue, but grasses like weeping lovegrass, plains bluestem and old world bluestem are

introduced.

“The urban sprawl has also taken some of the better habitat and changed over into timber stands or cleared for monoculture type areas,” Cox said.

In the last 20 to 25 years, housing developments have sprung up in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and other large towns across the state, which is eliminating or changing the dynamics of their preferred habitat. However, quail can be found in those fragmented segments if large enough acreage is available, he added.

Cox said the lack of prescribed burning on the landscape has also had a negative impact on quail numbers.

“Quail are an early-successional type of animal,” he explained. “What pops up in that first year after a burn are weeds and forbs, which are ideal feeding locations for quail.”

The second factor that affects quail is weather conditions, which goes hand-in-hand with habitat loss, Cox said. Weather conditions like hot, dry summers are not helpful for quail reproduction, he explained.

Cox became the senior upland game biologist within the last three years, when Oklahoma was coming out of the drought. He said hunter numbers and quail numbers were also at an all-time low.

“When we had the drought, it got so hot that the hens stopped nesting in the heat of the summer,” he explained. “If you have these mild summers like we have had in recent years—the wetter, cooler summers, that is the best conditions for birds to have good success to raise a lot of birds.”

Quail number and hunter numbers have doubled each year since the drought ended in June 2013, Cox said. Based on roadside surveys conducted in August and October, quail numbers have



Quail require a lot of diversity for their diet. They favor Oklahoma-native grasses mixed with weeds and shrubs. (Photo courtesy of Oklahoma State University)

increased almost 60 percent from 2014.

“Western Oklahoma is the area in the state that has the best population of birds,” Cox said.

The northwest region showed a 101 percent increase, while the southwest region showed a 78.4 percent increase compared to 2014.

Some parts of northeast and southeast Oklahoma have seen an increase in quail numbers, but he said it is not a dramatic increase like in the northwest and southwest regions.

However, quail numbers in the south-central and north-central parts of the state have declined the past couple of years compared to the other regions, Cox said. Based on the roadside surveys, the north-central and south-central regions showed an 18 and 83 percent decline, respectively.

“We haven’t pin-pointed exactly what is going on in the south-central part of the state besides habitat loss, invasion of eastern red cedar and bad fragmentation,” Cox explained. “The south-central region is not quite a bottleneck, but quail have a hard time moving or shuffling from one area to another.”

Cox said he expects quail numbers to fluctuate throughout the years, especially when Oklahoma has very hot and dry summers. However, ODWC and OSU continue to work together on different research projects including quail nest structures, aflatoxins in seeds, insect productions, aerial predators in western Oklahoma and other environmental impacts.

The research conducted by ODWC and OSU helps give landowners information to best manage their property. A common mistake landowners make is over or under grazing along with the lack of prescribed burning, Cox said. Poor land management can have a negative impact on the quail habitat, he added.

“If it looks like a golf course on someone’s property, then it’s not going to be conducive for quail,” he said. “Grazing is great as long as it’s done the right way.”

The National Resources Conservation Services can help adjust a landowner’s grazing rates to be more productive for cattlemen.

“The landowner has to make a living,” Cox said, “but, if you can try and help them balance property and not overgraze or under graze, and put prescribed burning in the picture, they can be productive on a piece of property as long it has native structure.”

The ODWC has wildlife technical assistance programs for landowners including wetland, habitat and quail restoration program, he said. Private land biologists can assess property to give management recommendations depending on the landowners’ needs.

“It’s not just quail,” he added. “These management programs can help other non-game species like monarch butterflies and honeybees.”

For more information on ODWC programs, visit wildlifedepartment.com. ★

John Deere releases 5G Series Tractors



John Deere unveils the 5G Series Tractors with narrow and highly-maneuverable configurations to expand the specialty tractor portfolio for vineyard and orchard producers and meet Final Tier 4 Engine emissions requirements.

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ible transmission choices with the 5G Series Tractors," adds Lammie. "The new 5G offers a mechanical 12F/12R transmission or 24F/12R transmission with PowerReverser."

For more information on the new 5G Series Tractors, see your local John Deere dealer or visit www.JohnDeere.com/Ag.

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RANCH RIGS & FARM FIXTURES

PHOTO DETAILS

The 5G Series Tractors build on the success of the 5EN Series to offer customers more choices for their specialty applications. (Courtesy photo)

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Rustic Beauty

Out for a drive just before Christmas, photographer Kathie Freeman came across this old bridge just outside of El Reno, Okla. Freeman said she had to take a picture of its beauty and rustic vibe. (Photo by Kathie Freeman)

OKLAHOMA FARM & RANCH OKFRØ

OKLAHOMA FARM & RANCH-Post Oak Media is looking for an energetic and professionally minded person for the position of Advertising Executive for Oklahoma Farm & Ranch magazine. The right candidate for this opportunity should have reliable transportation and be self-motivated. The ideal candidate must be able to multi-task and have experience in all Microsoft office programs. Competitive base salary plus commission, expense reimbursement, paid holidays and vacation, work from home. If this sounds like the job for you, submit your resume to OKFR, P.O. Box 831, Bowie, TX 76230.





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