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# OKLAHOMA FARM & RANCH

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# Party like it's 1776...

Fello OKFR readers, and welcome to the July issue of the Oklahoma Farm & Ranch magazine. The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday because it involves fireworks, summer nights, barbecues and most importantly, our freedom. I want to take a moment to thank all of those who have fought or are currently fighting for our freedom.

We also wish you a happy and safe Fourth of July. To kick this July issue off, check out our Calendar of Events to find an Independence Day celebration near you.



With the vast amount of rain we have received across the state, it is important to recognize the signs of foot infections in sheep and goats. Lameness in ruminant animals could be a sign of foot rot or foot scald. Read about the symptoms and cures in "Foot Infections in Sheep and Goats" in the Farm & Ranch section.

I had the pleasure of traveling this month to Overbrook, Okla., to visit with former professional bull rider, J.W. Hart. Born and raised in nearby Marietta, Okla., Hart always wanted to be a bull rider, dreaming of one day competing in the National Finals Rodeo. When the Professional Bull Riders, Inc., formed, Hart knew that was where he belonged. He spent 15 years competing—becoming the 1994 PBR Rookie of the Year and the 2002 PBR World Champion. Today, he focuses on his bucking bull program and raising kids. Read more about J.W. Hart and his family in "Riding Bulls to Raising Kids."

Shawna Russell will be performing at this year's Woody Guthrie Folk Festival in Okemah, Okla., on July 12-16. The Oklahoma native began singing in public at seven years old and formed a band with her dad at 13. Fast forward a few years, she recently recorded "BackAround," which is a collection of seven songs she wrote and co-wrote. Read more in "Slow Down in Oklahoma" in the Lifestyle section.

Summer is full of celebrations including the annual Stratford Peach Festival on July 15. Taking place in the "Peach Capital of Oklahoma," this year marks the 41st celebration with food, entertainment and, of course, peaches. Learn more in "Just Peachy" in the Attractions section.

Next, read about a forb that can provide good forage for cattle—yellow sweet clover. Growing along roadsides, yellow sweet clover can grow to more than six feet tall. Learn more in the Outdoors section.

If you have an event, photo or topic idea that you would like to see in Oklahoma Farm & Ranch, email editor@okfronline.com. Keep up with new OKFR updates on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. For more information or subscription information, visit our website www.OKFRonline.com.

Until next month,

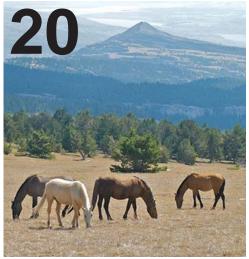


## ON THE COVER

J.W. Hart spent more than 15 years in the rodeo arena as a professional bull rider. These days, he focuses on his bucking bull program, being a PBR broadcaster and raising kids. He and his wife LeAnn Hart said they owe everything to God. Pictured on the cover is LeAnn Hart (back left), J.W. Hart, Elsie Hart, Wacey Hart (front left) and Makayla Hart at home on their ranch in Overbrook, Okla. (Photo by Laci Jones)

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J.W. Hart was the 2002 PBR World Champion.

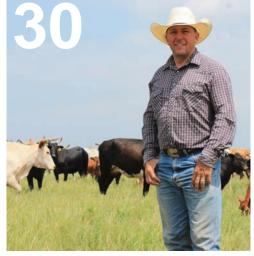
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The family theme runs deep through Shawna Russell's music.

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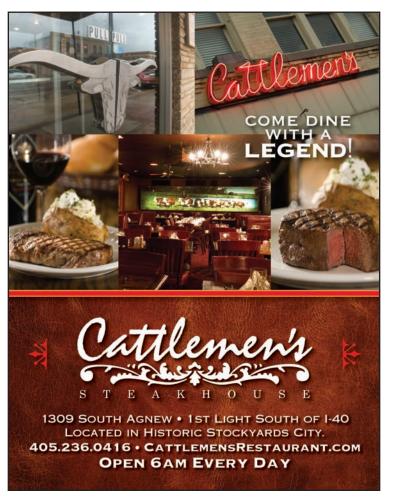




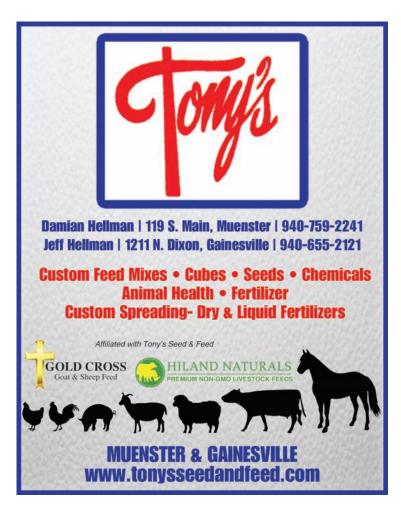


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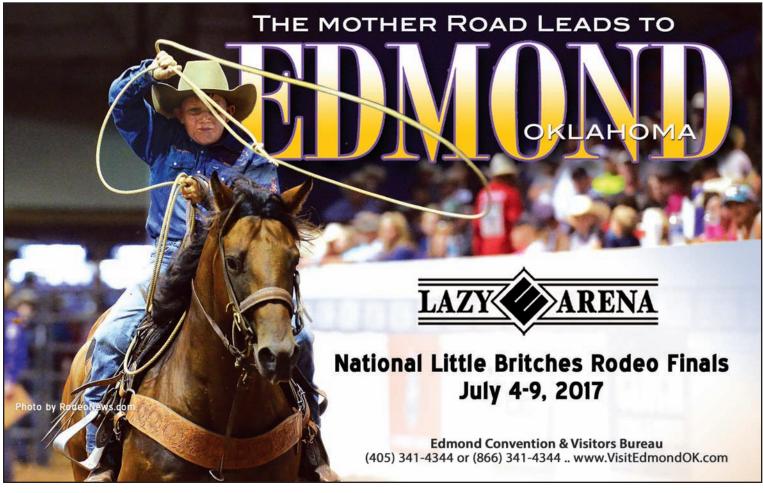












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Wayne Cornish. He performed as a rodeo
performer and as a rodeo clown.

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

OKFR welcomes 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. OKFR reserves the right to edit or reject any letters.
- 9. Letters must be mailed to OKFR Letter to the Editor, P.O. Box 831, Bowie, TX 76230 or emailed to editor@okfronline.com.

# FOOT INFECTIONS— in Sheep and Goal

By Barry Whitworth, DVM

ith all the rain that has been occurring, sheep and goat producers should be observing their flocks for signs of lameness. Lame sheep or goats could indicate a problem with foot rot or foot scald. Foot rot and foot scald are two foot diseases that occur in sheep and goat operations.

According to the Sheep Survey of 2011 conducted by the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS), 37.3 percent of the respondents noted a problem with foot rot in their sheep flocks in the previous three years. In the 2009 NAHMS Goat Study, 11.4 percent of the meat goat producers indicated problems with "sores on the hoof with a foul odor." Foot problems cost producers money in labor, treatment cost, decreased weight gains, decreased wool production and premature culling. Early recognition and treatment is the key to a successful outcome of the problem.

Foot rot and foot scald are more commonly found when certain conditions are present. Rainy weather, which keeps pastures wet or muddy, promotes foot rot and the development of foot scald. When the skin is continually moist, bacteria can penetrate more easily. Obviously these conditions are more common in the spring and fall. Other conditions that promote these problems are hard surfaces and tall tough grass. Tough grass can irritate the skin between the claws, creating an entrance for bacteria.

Foot scald is caused by the bacteria *Fusobacterium necropho-rum*. This bacteria is a common inhabitant of the digestive tract of ruminants. It does not appear to be contagious. This same bacteria



Foot rot in sheep and goat can be eradicated through several different programs. (Photo by Laci Jones)

usually contributes to the development of foot rot. This why many experts believe that foot scald is a precursor to foot rot.

As stated above foot rot usually begins with F. necrophorum, which is followed by the invasion of Dichelobacter nodosus. D. nodosus is contagious. The bacteria does not survive long outside the host. However, the bacteria will live for years in the feet of sheep and goats. The bacteria has many strains. In general, they can be classified as benign or virulent. Virulent strains are able to destroy the horn. Benign strains do little or no damage to the horn. This is why in some countries foot rot is separated into Benign foot rot and Virulent foot rot. The United States does not separate foot rot into distinct diseases.

One other bacteria that may contribute to the development of foot rot or foot scald is *Trueper*-

ella pyogenes. This bacteria may increase the susceptibility of the hoof to the other two bacteria. This bacteria is found in the environment and is associated with foot abscesses.

The first sign seen in foot scald is lameness. The space between the claws may appear red, hairless, swollen and moist. All four feet may be affected. No odor is present, which is a key difference from foot rot. Another characteristic of foot scald is that the condition rapidly improves in dry weather.

Benign foot rot will have all the clinical signs of foot scald. In addition to those signs, the lesions may involve a small amount of the horn and have a foul odor. Lameness will not be as severe as Virulent foot rot.

Sheep and goats that have Virulent foot rot will be lame. The animals will graze on their knees. The space between the claws will be necrotic and the hoof will be affected. The condition will have a foul odor. In severe infection, the hoof wall will separate from the pedal bone. The condition is highly contagious and will spread rapidly through the flock.

Both foot rot and foot scald are usually diagnosed on clinical signs. The presence of a foul odor is important to separate foot rot from foot scald. A definitive diagnosis is based on culturing the bacteria from the foot.

Most cases of foot rot and foot scald respond well to antibiotics and topical application of antibacterial medications. If large numbers of animals need treatment, the use of foot baths may make the job easier. Copper sulfate, formalin, and zinc sulfate may be used in foot baths, but a 10 percent zinc sulfate solution is preferred. In foot rot infections, the hoof should

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# INFECTIONS—

be trimmed and cleaned of all necrotic debris. If the job is done correctly, recovery time will be shortened. Foot rot vaccines have been shown to speed up the recovery time. Producers should check with their veterinarian before using a vaccine since complications with the vaccine are not uncommon.

Preventing foot rot and foot scald begins with proper nutrition. Hoof health is influence by minerals and vitamins. Special emphasis should be placed on ensuring adequate amounts of biotin, zinc, Vitamin A and Vitamin E. Hooves should not be allowed to over grow. Routine trimming and examination will ensure a healthy foot. During poor weather condition, the feet need to be kept dry. Providing shelter should protect the flock. When conditions are wet and muddy, producers may want to walk their sheep or goats through a 10 percent zinc sulfate solution foot bath every two weeks.

Another method to keep the feet dry is to make the animals walk through lime that has been mixed with zinc. This material can



Foot rot and foot scald can be prevented by proper nutrition and keeping feet dry. (Photo by Laci Jones)

be placed on a pad and put in location such around water troughs or lanes leading to the barn where the animals must walk across the material. Foot rot vaccine has been used to reduce the incidence of foot rot. The vaccine needs to be administered four to six weeks before the anticipated time of problems with foot rot. Lastly, all lame animals need to be isolated and treated immediately.

Eradication of foot rot is possible but difficult. Several different programs are available. All the programs have the same basic formula. The main parts are treating and isolating infected animals, culling nonresponding cases and isolating new purchases.

Foot rot can be a frustrating disease. However, if producers follow strict biosecurity and prompt treatment of lame animals, the disease should be kept to a minimum.

If producers would like more information on foot rot and foot scald, they should contact their local veterinarian or local county extension educator.



# SINGING TO THE CATTLE

By Ralph Chain

In the 1890s, with the exception of about a dozen, cowboy songs were not generally known. Jack Thorpe, who researched cowboy songs in the 1880s, was only able to find a few verses of cowboy songs.

None of the cowboys who could sing ever remembered an entire song. Cowboy songs were always sung by one person, never by a group.

A cowboy never had a good voice. If he had one to start with, he lost it hollering at cattle, sleeping out in the open or telling the judge he did not steal that horse.

The cowboy hardly ever knew what tune he was singing the song to just some old tune he had heard and known as a boy. It is generally thought that cowboys did a lot of singing around the herd at night to quiet them.

A lot of those words were taken from songs of sailors. "O Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie" was originally a tune sung by sailors when they buried someone at sea.

Two of the oldest songs were "When the Work's All Done This Fall" and "Utah Carroll," written in the 1880s.

"Little Joe the Wrangler" was written by Jack Thorpe. He knew several of the cowboys who knew Little Joe the night he got killed.

I had always heard about the cowboys in the early trail days singing to cattle to calm them down. I really never thought much about it.

We used to partner with the King Ranch in Texas several years back. Jay Evans worked for the King Ranch and took care of all the cattle that the King Ranch was in partnership with. I always remember how he would roll



Cowboys would often sing "cowboy songs" because it had a calming effect on the cattle. (Photo courtesy of Chain Ranch)

down the windows and turn up the radio when we were gathering cattle in the Flint Hills and other places where we ran the partnership cattle. We had shipped 240 head of King Ranch steers from Texas to an alfalfa field north of Seiling, Okla. These cattle had been gathered with a helicopter on the 825,000-acre ranch.

The morning we got ready to ship the cattle, I had four semicattle trucks to be at the pasture at 7:30 a.m. We took six cowboys to the pasture and were working to drive the steers into the pens. At 10:30 a.m., we did not have one steer even close to the pen, and they were scattered everywhere.

We wondered how in the world we were going to pen those steers. I told the cowboys to push the steers in the northwest corner of the pasture, which they were able to do. We held the steers for about 30 minutes in the corner of the pasture.

I was driving my Chevrolet Suburban, which had a tape player in it. I placed a tape of Hee Haw Gospel Music in the player, rolled the windows down and turned the music up as loud as I could get it. I slowly drove through the steers, playing the music. The steers immediately began listening to the strange sound. The cowboys thought I had lost my mind and wondered what was happening. But the steers forgot about trying to get away and listened to the music.

The cowboys slowly rode behind them and I went in front, playing music. It was unbelievable, but the steers followed me across the pasture, about a mile, and into the corral. Everyone sat around in amazement and could not believe that we had penned the steers in such a fashion. So when the cowboys sang to the trail herds in the 1880s, it must have worked for them.

We had 200 head of Limousinecross heifers on wheat pasture up around Mooreland, Okla. Wes Sander, my nephew, was wondering how he was going to get them gathered up.

I called him, after gathering the King Ranch steers and told him I had it all figured out. I told him to take his pickup out in the field and turn his radio up as loud as he could get it, and the heifers would follow him to the corral. He called me the next evening and said it doesn't work on Limousine cattle, because he had heifers as far away as five miles east and scattered all over the country. So, playing music doesn't work on all types of cattle.





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# OSU RELEASES NEW WHEAT VARIETIES

By Everett Brazil, III

klahoma is a leader in hard red winter wheat production, and Oklahoma State University continues that legacy yearly through the wheat breeding team, which works tirelessly to impute new traits to improve quality. Southern Plains producers now have more options for the 2017 crop, as OSU has released two new varieties, in Spirit Rider and Smith's Gold.

Brett Carver, who holds the Wheat Genetics Chair in Agriculture Wheat Breeding and Genetics, is the leader of the wheat breeding team. The varieties were officially released in February, he said.

Both varieties have parentage in previous popular varieties in Oklahoma. For Spirit Rider, it was OK Bullet, itself born out of another popular variety, Jagger. Researchers combined OK Bullet with an experimental strain to find better strength, while maintaining the high yield it offered.

"The idea of this cross was to continue the high-yield potential and straw strength of OK Bullet, but to reduce the height of OK Bullet, to make the standability better," he said.

"The high-yield potential, combined with excellent straw strength and excellent standability, I think, will carry it into high-producing areas in the Oklahoma Panhandle or North-Central Oklahoma where straw strength is needed."

Disease resistance, especially against leaf rust, was also a priority for Spirit Rider, as they saw decreased resistance to the disease in OK Bullet in its final years, Carver said.

"We added a gene that is resistant to several diseases," he said. "We did see leaf rust this year, but I think under normal leaf rust infections, we're going to see better protection against leaf rust, and other diseases than we did with OK Bullet."

Carver also added that Spirit Rider exhibits the high milling and baking qualities found in OK Bullet.

Smith's Gold was created out of Gallagher, another popular variety, with the goal to provide increased insect and disease resistance.

"Our first objective was to provide green bug resistance, with Hessian fly resistance already (realized) in Gallagher," he said. "We wanted to extend stripe rust protection offered





Oklahoma State University has released two new wheat varieties, Spirit Rider and Smith's Gold. (Photo courtesy of OSU)

by Gallagher in adult plant stages to earlier in plant development."

The researchers were successful in creating insect resistance in the variety.

"This is really our first green bug-resistant variety in a long time, since the 1980s," he said. "This is combined with Hessian fly resistance, and the Hessian fly resistance has remained important in Oklahoma, particularly

Southwest Oklahoma, or conservation tilling producers."

Resistance to stripe rust also has helped make the variety one that is well-tuned for Oklahoma.

"We've had stripe rust for many years, and it seems to be here to stay," he said. "In quality, Smith's Gold is a step above Gallagher, on baking quality." (\$\mathbb{Q}\$.

# **NON-INFECTIOUS DIARRHEA** in the adult horse

By Lauren Lamb, DVM

iarrhea in the adult horse can be caused by infectious and non-infectious diseases. Last month we talked about infectious causes of diarrhea: this month we will focus on the common cause of noninfectious diarrhea. The three most common causes of non-infectious diarrhea include sand accumulation in the colon, proliferative and inflammatory bowel disease, colon neoplasia (cancer), cantharidin toxicity (blister beetle) and parasite infection in the large colon.

Horses with sand accumulation in the colon frequently have a history of living in an area with sandy soil and being fed hay on the ground. Other common findings in the history include weight loss over a period of months to weeks, mild colic multiple times prior to developing a severe colic and intermittent or consistent diarrhea. Yes, I said that correctly, sand accumulation in the colon will cause colic as well as diarrhea.

A fecal sedimentation is a simple test that can be performed on a horse's feces to confirm sand accumulation in the large colon. A fecal sedimentation can be performed by simply collecting a hand full of feces from the horse's rectum and placing this feces in a plastic palpation sleeve. The palpation sleeve is then filled with one to two liters of water and hung up on the wall for 10 minutes.

After 10 minutes the fingers of the plastic palpation sleeve will be full of sand if your horse has sand accumulation in the large colon. Not all horses that have sand accumulation in the large colon will pass sand in their feces.

Abdominal radiographs of the lower abdomen can also be used



Diarrhea in the adult horse is a serious medical issue and can be life threatening. (Photo by Laci Jones)

to diagnose sand accumulation in the large colon. A powerful radiograph machine is needed to obtain diagnostic radiographs of the lower abdomen. Horses requiring an abdominal radiograph may need to be referred to a specialty equine medical center.

Treatment for sand colic can consist of feeding and tubing the horse with psyllium. In the case of severe sand accumulation, surgery may be needed to remove the sand from the colon.

Proliferative and inflammatory bowel disease causes thickening of the colon wall, which in turn will cause the horse to have diarrhea. The colon wall thickening is secondary to inflammatory or neoplastic cells migrating into the colon wall. When the colon wall is abnormally thickened, the water absorption from the colon is disrupted, which results in diarrhea.

Proliferative and inflammatory diseases can also affect the small intestine. If the small intestine and colon are both affected, a horse will frequently show signs of diarrhea along with weight loss.

Proliferative and inflammatory bowel disease is the name used to describe a broad category of gastrointestinal diseases. Within this large category there are four to five specific diseases. Each disease is treated differently from the other and some diseases are not treatable, so arriving at the correct diagnosis is critical. Unfortunately, the correct diagnosis can be quite illusive in most cases.

Frequently expensive and invasive diagnostic tests, such as surgical biopsies of the colon, are needed to arrive at the correct diagnosis. A surgical biopsy can be obtained via rectal palpation or laparoscopic surgery. Laparoscopic surgery is more invasive than the rectal biopsy, but can potentially yield better diagnostic results.

Laparoscopic surgery also allows the surgeon to visually examine approximately 50 percent of the entire intestinal tract. Many times, horses with a proliferative and inflammatory bowel disease will need to be referred to a specialist for a thorough diagnostic evaluation.

Simple blood tests to look at the horse's white blood cell count, red blood cell count and chemistry panel are rarely beneficial in cases with proliferative and inflammatory bowel disease. However, your veterinarian will usually run these tests on a horse that presents for diarrhea to help rule out several other potential causes of diarrhea (such as infectious diarrhea).

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# DIARRHEA

Ultrasonography of the abdomen can be used to identify thickening of the colon or small intestinal wall, but it will not tell the exact cause of the wall thickening.

If your horse is diagnosed with a proliferative and inflammatory bowel disease, the treatment can consist of immune suppressing drugs and anti-inflammatory medication. There is no therapeutic option for a horse with colon cancer.

Cantharidin toxicity, more commonly known as blister beetle toxicity, is caused by a horse ingesting the blister beetle in alfalfa hay. The blister beetles, which contain the cantharidin toxin within their body, feed on the alfalfa flower and can be incorporated into the hay while it is being cut and baled. Blister beetles tend to swarm in a small portion of the field, so only one or two bales of hay in a large field may be contaminated with blister beetles. Blister beetle outbreaks occur most commonly in Oklahoma and Texas. The high prevalence of blister beetle cases in these two states is related to the habitat in which the beetle lives.

The severity of clinical signs seen in horses infected with blister beetles is directly proportional to the amount of cantharidin toxin ingested. When the cantharidin toxin is ingested, it will cause severe inflammation and ulceration of the entire gastrointestinal tract, including the colon.

The inflammation and irritation of the colon results in severe diarrhea and a significant loss of fluids and electrolytes.

The cantharidin toxin also affects the kidneys and can result in kidney failure. A predominated electrolyte abnormality seen in blister beetle case is low calcium. Other common clinical signs include severe depression, mild to severe colic, decreased appetite, increased heart and increased respiratory rate.

A tentative diagnosis for blister beetle toxicity can be made based on clinical signs, blood work and history of being fed alfalfa. Definitive diagnosis requires measuring the cantharidin concentration in the urine or intestinal contents.

Therapy for blister beetle toxicity is centered on supportive care (IV fluids, electrolytes, anti-inflammatory medication and antibiotics) and medication to help neutralize the cantharidin toxin within the gastrointestinal tract. The prognosis for survival is directly proportional to the amount of cantharidin toxin ingested.





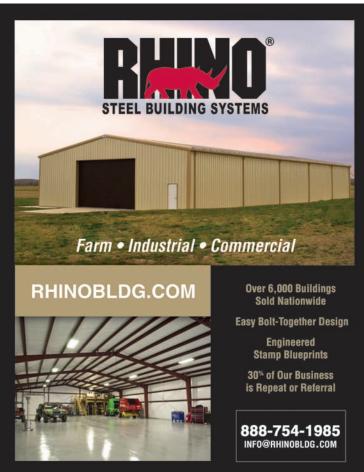
(Top to bottom) Image of a large colon that has been opened at the time of necropsy. This colon has severe inflammation and the mucosa is blistered and peeling away from the colon wall. (Photo courtesy of the University of Georgia) This abdominal radiograph of a horse shows sand has settled out in the colon and can be seen on the bottom of the radiographs. (Photo courtesy of Lauren Lamb)

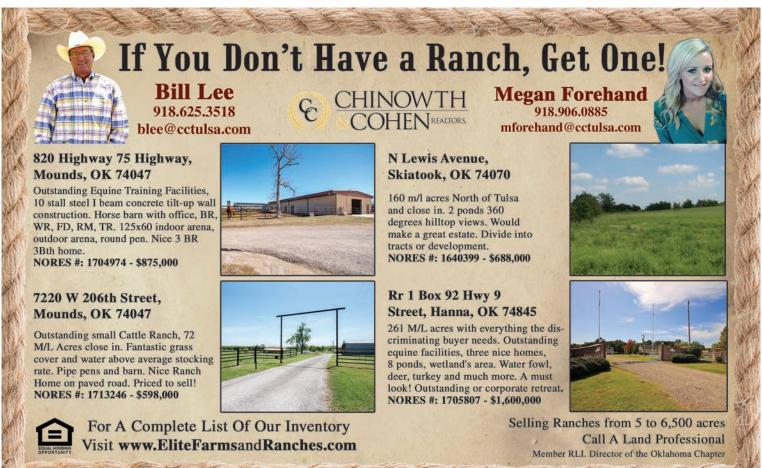
Finally, a parasite infection in the large colon can cause non-infectious diarrhea in an adult horse. We rarely see diarrhea in an adult horse secondary to parasite, due to the highly effective dewormers and parasite management programs.

In summary, diarrhea in the adult horse

is a serious medical problem that can be life threatening and expensive to treat. If you notice your horse has diarrhea, you should consult your veterinarian as soon as possible. With proper and timely therapy, most horses with diarrhea have a good prognosis to make a full recovery.







# THE BORDER BASH

By Ddee Haynes

pril 28-29, 2017 marked the Annual Border Bash held at the Legendary "Lazy E" Arena located in Guthrie, Okla. The Lazy E arena is centrally located just south of Guthrie, Okla., and northeast of Oklahoma City. The "E" opened its doors in December 1984 just in time to host the season's National Finals Steer Roping, coinciding that year with the National Finals Rodeo, which at the time was held in downtown Oklahoma City.

The original owner, E.K. Gaylord II, sold the property in 2005 to a partnership from Nevada. In October 2013, the McKinney family from Midland, Texas, purchased the Lazy E.

The McKinney family recognized the Lazy E's place in rodeo and Oklahoma lore and has been committed to maintaining and improving the world's premier facility. The Lazy E, known as home to many well-known professional cowboys and cowgirls, adds an extra touch of excitement to the Border Bash contestants when they pull through the massive gates for the first time.

The Border Bash, which started two years ago, is just what the name implies, a bash between two states and four teams. Over a two-day period, two joint rodeos were held simultaneously in three arenas.

This event pits the Oklahoma High School Rodeo Association versus the Kansas High School Rodeo Association and the Oklahoma Junior High School Rodeo Association versus the Kansas Junior High School Rodeo Association. The event was also open to any high school or junior high member of any other state association. This year several Texas



OKJHSRA member Landon Sechrest chute dogging at the Border Bash. (Photo courtesy of Sik Shot)

cowboys and cowgirls showed up ready to compete.

Saturday the start time was scheduled for 9 a.m. However, Mother Nature had other plans. Strong winds, hail and rain delayed the start time to 10:30 a.m. As I have said more times than I can count, rodeo life ain't for sissies.

Still fighting the rain and wind, the contestants, family members, judges, stock contractors, timers and secretaries all stepped up to the plate and made it happen. Granted, two of the three arenas were inside and the third covered, it was still cold going between the arenas, the stalls and the trailers. I honestly believe not a soul stayed completely dry and warm during the two-day event.

The covered outdoor arena was run by the Kansas High School and Junior High School Rodeo Associations. The girls' and boys' break-away roping, boys' tie down roping and boy/girl partner ribbon roping were held in that arena.

Inside the coliseum, the big arena had been broken into two smaller arenas. The larger of the two was used for barrel racing, pole bending, steer wrestling and team roping. The smaller arena hosted bareback riding, bronc riding, bull riding, chute dogging and goat tying for the junior high boys and the high school and junior high school girls. The Oklahoma Associations were running both of these arenas.

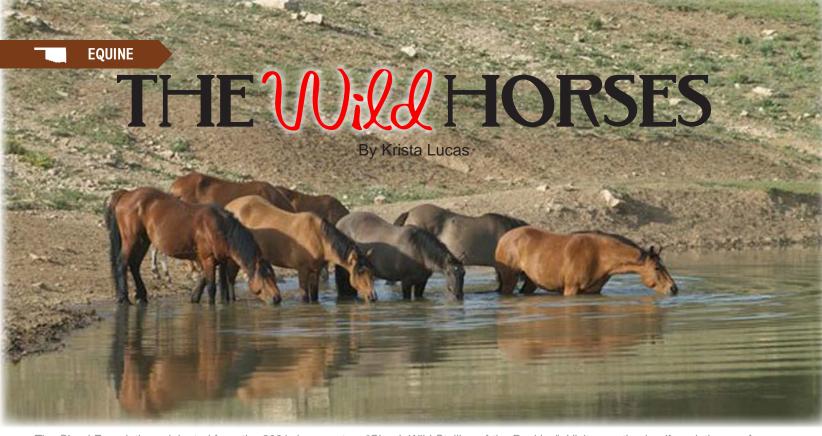
The announcer sat in the middle of the two arenas with four timers,

two for each arena. It was chaotic but well-organized.

Spectators could sit in the middle and watch the barrel racers then turn their heads and watch rough stock riders on the other end. It was rare until the very end of the day that all three arenas did not have an event running. More than 700 runs or rides were made each day.

Every cowboy or cowgirl who entered those arenas that weekend laid it all on the line and gave it their best. Some walked away happy, while others left disappointed.

But just like the sunshine, those who left disappointed will show up again and the next time they just might shine a little brighter than the last time.  $\mbox{\ensuremath{\mbox{$\sc K}}}$ 



The Cloud Foundation originated from the 2001 documentary "Cloud, Wild Stallion of the Rockies". Visit www.thecloudfoundation.org for more information. (Courtesy of the Cloud Foundation)

here is one breed that represents mystery and untamed beauty. These wild horses roaming the land can be the subject of controversy but are amazing to see nonetheless. Mustangs are known as the feral horse of North America.

For over 300 years, these horses have developed into tough and independent animals, able to survive on very little.

When captured by Native Americans and later cowboys, mustangs were popular for cattle work, being naturally intelligent and quick. Although, with many of the best horses being captured, the quality of the wild herds left over declined.

"Mustang" came from the Spanish word "mesteno" which means "wild" or "ownerless." These horses compete with cattle, as well as other wildlife, for grazing space and water.

In 1960, the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros was formed in order to save this breed from being wiped off the face of the earth.

In 1976, the Bureau of Land

Management created the Adopt-A-Horse program, allowing people to buy Mustangs from the range for a small fee.

The BLM wants to preserve and protect the Mustang, ensuring they have healthy land to live on. The adoption fee is set up to prevent too many of these Mustangs being shipped off to slaughter.

There have been problems with BLM Mustang management. There is always the issue of having too many horses and not enough land, resources or people to take care of them. Mustang associations work to increase awareness and education to the public.

It is important for people to be informed before adopting a wild horse. It is quite easy to adopt a Mustang, and it can be very dangerous when these horses end up in the hands of inexperienced horsemen.

These horses have never been in contact with humans, and it takes a good understanding of equine behavior to teach this breed. They must learn that the human is its new "leader" and not a "predator."

New Mustang owners should take many other factors into consideration as well.

Mustangs are accustomed to low quality food, so they should not be given rich, sweet feed at first. They also should be eased into hoof maintenance and other grooming care. Their hooves are accustomed to being worn down by walking many miles a day, and that will obviously change when brought into domestic life.

Body language is important to think about when training a Mustang. These horses are used to being in a herd and will need a new "leader" to take the place of other horses. This must be done with respect toward the wild horse, by gaining its confidence and trust slowly but surely.

The Extreme Mustang Makeover is an increasingly popular event that takes Mustangs "from wild to mild." Trainers have 100 days to tame a wild Mustang and have it ready to compete at an Extreme Mustang Makeover event, held in 10 different cities across the United States.

Horse and rider compete for

cash and prizes, all while displaying the trainability of the breed and hoping to find a suitable adopter at the end of it.

The events were created to showcase the value of Mustangs through the national training competition.

So far, 47,000 wild horses have come off the range for short and long term holding, and almost 4,000 Mustangs have been adopted at Extreme Makeover events.

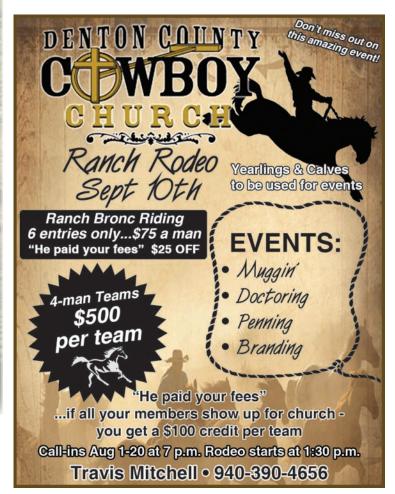
Ben Masters' documentary, "Unbranded," follows him and three friends through their journey of adopting Mustangs and riding from Mexico to Canada to inspire wild horse adoptions.

The documentary helped Masters auction the Mustang, Luke, for \$25,000 to benefit wild horse adoptions at the Fort Worth Extreme Mustang Makeover in 2013.

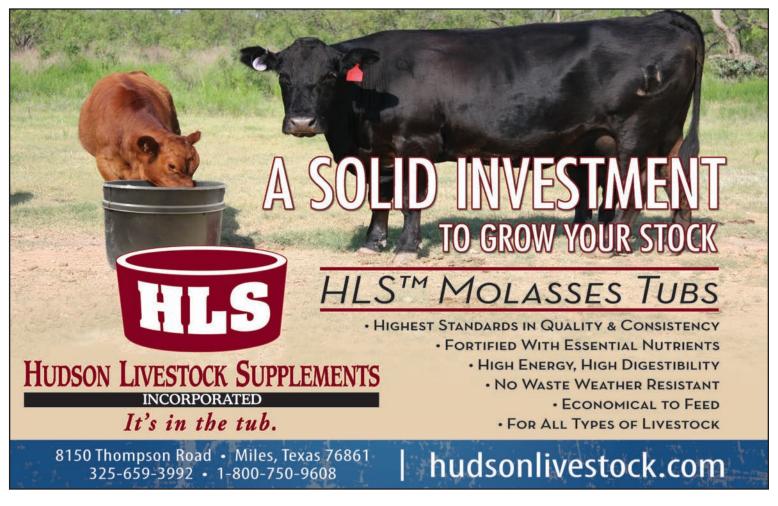
"Unbranded" is very informative and a must-see. Extreme Mustang Makeover will be back in Fort Worth at the Will Rogers Equestrian Center Sept. 14-16, 2017. 

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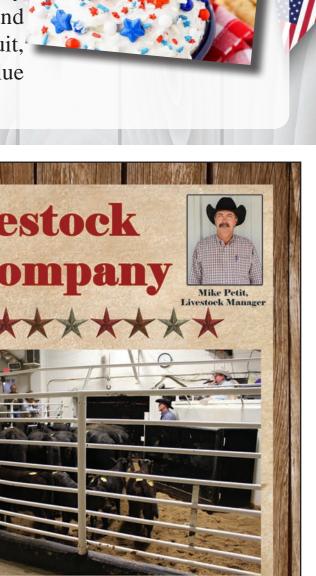
# Cake Batter Dip - Red, White & Blue

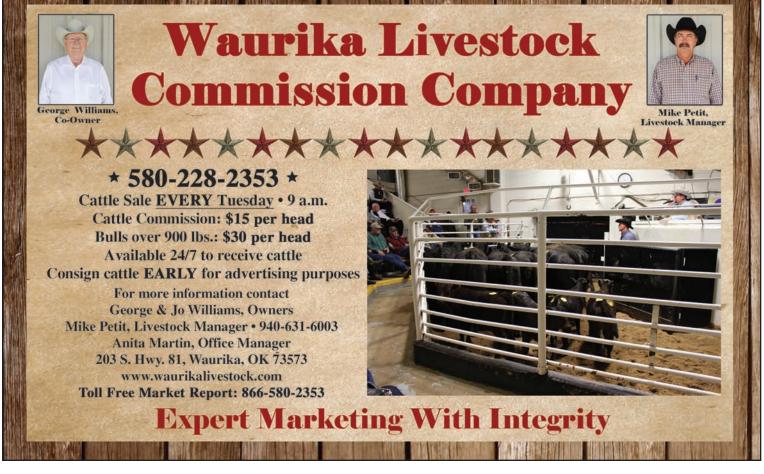
## **INGREDIENTS**

8 oz. whipped cream cheese 4 oz. cool whip, thawed 1 cup white cake mix, dry ½ cup sprinkles

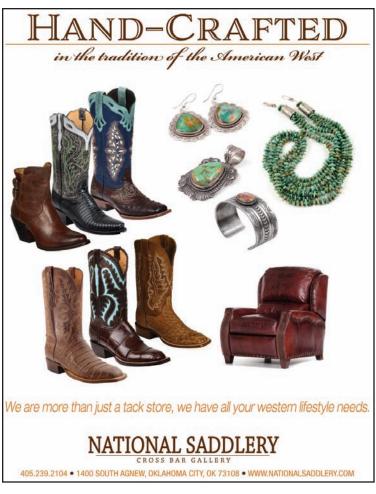
# INSTRUCTIONS

Beat or stir together the cream cheese, cool whip, and cake mix until fully combined. Stir in the majority of the sprinkles. Transfer to a serving bowl and sprinkle with remaining sprinkles. Serve with fruit, graham crackers or cookies. Add red, white and blue sprinkles to customize the dip.





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# Life of a Ranch Wife

By Lanna Mills

s cattle raisers, our ultimate goal is to produce healthy calves. The objective is to have cows that carry the calf to term, have no trouble calving, have a healthy live calf, give plenty of milk to ensure the calf gets all the nutrition needed and breeds back quickly. Ideally, this cycle would continue again and again. However, things don't always go as we plan. There are many circumstances that can arise and change everything. When they do, we must deal with the problem.

Sometimes cows don't breed back or are late breeding back. This may be caused by various factors including nutrition, environment, genetics, age or the bull being bred to. Some cows breed back as they should but pregnancy loss occurs. This is often caused by infections, nutritional deficiency, genetics and stress. It's said that six to 10 percent of beef calves die during or shortly after birth. When these events occur, we are left with two choices: we keep the cow and give her a second chance or she is sold.

Sometimes the cow carries the calf to term, has a live calf, and then something occurs during or after birth causing the calf to be orphaned. This can happen if the cow has trouble calving and develops nerve damage and cannot get up, or if she develops infection after birth. Some cattle, mainly heifers, will have a viable calf but doesn't claim it. Some cows claim the calf, but the calf is unable to suck due to the teats being too large. Many calves are orphaned in dairies when the calves are taken from the cows so that the milk produced may be collected for human consumption. Whatever the situation, the calf cannot survive on its own.

To save orphaned calves, we must make sure they receive the proper nutrition and care needed. It is important for the calf to receive colostrum. Colostrum is the first milk, which contains nutrients and antibodies to protect against disease. Calves should receive colostrum as their first feeding within hours of birth. If the calf is unable to get colostrum from the cow, powdered colostrum replacement may be purchased from a feed store. After the initial feeding of colostrum, the calf should be bottle fed calf milk replacer twice daily or needs to be put on a nurse cow.



Calves unable to get colostrum from the cow should be fed colostrum replacement. The calf should then be bottle fed calf milk replacer twice daily or needs to be put on a nurse cow. (Photo by Lanna Mills)

The calf needs to be watched closely for the development of scours. If scouring occurs, electrolytes need to be replenished as soon as possible. Bolus or antibiotic injection may be given to cure the cause of the scours. Calves should have fresh water available to them at all times. Dry grass hay should be offered. They won't eat much, but it makes for great bedding. When the calf reaches a couple weeks old, sweet feed can be offered, but continue with a bottle of milk replacer twice daily. As the calf grows and ages, it should begin to eat more hay and grain. A mixture of sweet feed, creep pellets and corn are great for calves ready to wean. Bottle calves should be kept somewhere where they can stay cool if it's summer or warm if it's winter and somewhere coyotes can't get to them. A defenseless calf makes for an easy

meal for a hungry coyote.

Raising cattle on the bottle isn't easy and requires commitment, but it also brings great satisfaction. Knowing that you are giving life to something that otherwise would have perished is an amazing feeling. Bottle calves are great for kids. They help them learn responsibility, care, compassion and work ethic.

Raising cattle is a gamble as anyone who's done it knows. Things usually don't go exactly how we planned, but that is just part of it. We make the best out of what we are given. Bottle calves aren't going to make you rich. Heck, you are lucky to break even after numerous \$50 to \$70 bags of milk replacer, hay, feed, medicine and vaccines. The satisfaction is payment enough for me, and I'll take in a calf looking for a mama any day. &

# Childhood Memories Recalled= By Judy Wade

s I looked out my kitchen window recently, I was surprised to see a roadrunner scurrying across the arena. That sight took me back to my childhood and some of the creatures kids my age amused ourselves with.

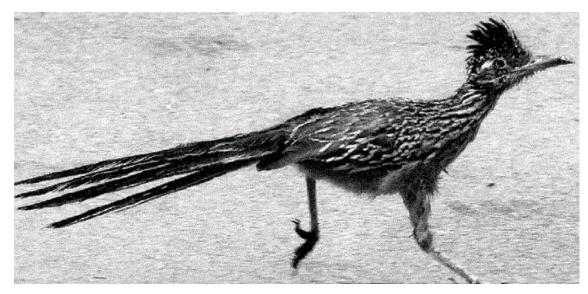
We were country kids living in southern Oklahoma. We did not spend hours in front of the television (even if we had one). Cell phones, iPads, video games and the internet did not exist, and we played outside and entertained ourselves.

Some of the critters in addition to the roadrunner that fascinated us were doodlebugs, horny toads and fireflies also known as lightning bugs.

### Roadrunner

Spotting a roadrunner was a rare event. There was no way you could run fast enough to catch him, and he seldom had to resort to flying to elude you. He just kept running! In fact, a roadrunner can run up to 20 miles an hour. He is a sight to see with his brown, white and black plumage, white belly, brown crest and long tail. Had we been able to get close enough, we could have seen his four toes, two pointing backward and two forward, and short orange, blue and white colored feathers flaring behind his eyes.

The roadrunner feeds on insects, spiders, tarantulas, scorpions, mice, lizards and small snakes. Actually named chaparral, he was nicknamed roadrunner because he was most frequently seen running across a road. Although







Pictured top to bottom is a roadrunner, a doodlebug's ant pit and a close up image of a doodle bug. (Courtesy

he is the state bird of New Mexico, he can be seen in Oklahoma and Texas.

#### Doodlebug

Have you ever sat for long periods of time in a sandy place with a small stick enticing doodlebugs to come to the surface? The trick is to stir the tiny pit and recite, "Doodlebug, doodlebug, come out of your hole. Your house is on fire and your children will burn!" As if by magic, a small insect will

appear, and you can put him in a jar or cup to be released later. We didn't realize the chant was unnecessary; all we had to do was stir his ant pit!

Doodlebugs are actually larvae of the antlion, and as the name suggests, they feed on ants and occasionally other small insects. They may spend up to three years in the larvae stage before emerging to fly. They make their ant pit by crawling backward in a circle

until they build up their conical pit. Then they burrow into the bottom and await their prey to fall in. They walk backwards, leaving a trail that looks like someone doodling, hence the name.

#### **Fireflies**

Nothing was more fun on a summer night than to catch fireflies and put them in a jar to be released later. We even had contests to see who could gather the most, and it was not easy.

Fireflies are actually beetles, and there are over 2,000 species. They are, of course, nocturnal, and most are winged. They have dedicated light organs located under their abdomens.

They take in oxygen and combine it with a substance called luciferin to produce light with almost no heat. The intermittent light is used to help fireflies find potential mates.

As children we were not interested in the scientific explanation. To us they were beautiful, mysterious and magical.

#### Horny Toad

Then there was the horny toad. We girls did not like this creature, but the boys delighted in catching one on the playground or bringing one from home to torment the females. It looked like a miniature dinosaur with its two big horns and four smaller ones along the back of its head and the scaly spikes along its back.

The boys hoped it would spit blood at one of us. Actually, the blood comes from the toad's eyelid and is one of several defense mechanisms. Its brown, grey and rust color provides camouflage, and it has the ability to puff up its body and make itself look even more menacing.

While its most common name is horned toad, and some people call it a horned frog, it is neither. It is actually a horned lizard and is not amphibious like the frog or toad but is found in hot, arid areas. Its favorite food is what we commonly call "red ants."

These daunting creatures are rarely seen today, and while they are not on the federal endangered list, they are endangered in some states.

Their lessened population is due to a combination of urban encroachment and reduced habitat, pesticides, agricultural practices and pet trade.

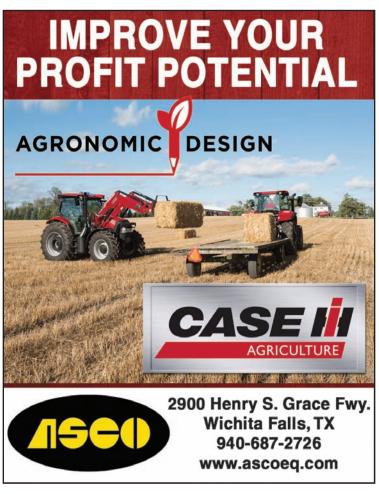
The horned toad is the state reptile of the state of Texas, and the horned frog is the mascot of Texas Christian University, but they were once plentiful in Oklahoma when I was a child.

Like most of you, I do not really yearn to return to my childhood, but once in a while it is fun to revisit old memories. The roadrunner, doodlebugs, fireflies and horny toads will not be forgotten soon.

What was that I just heard? It sounded like "bob bob white." Sure enough, I looked out the window and there is a pair of quail in my front yard. But, that is a different story for a different time. (\$\mathbb{Q}\$.













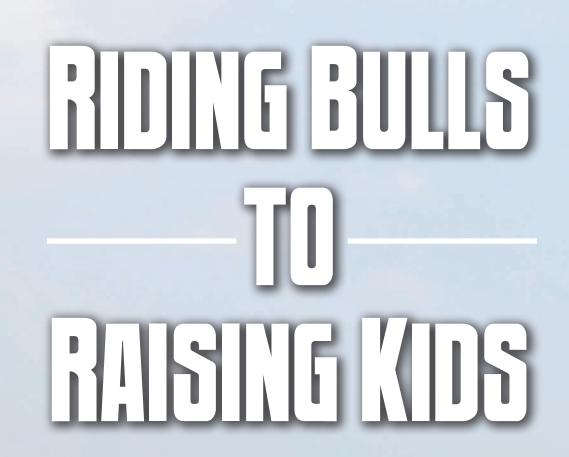
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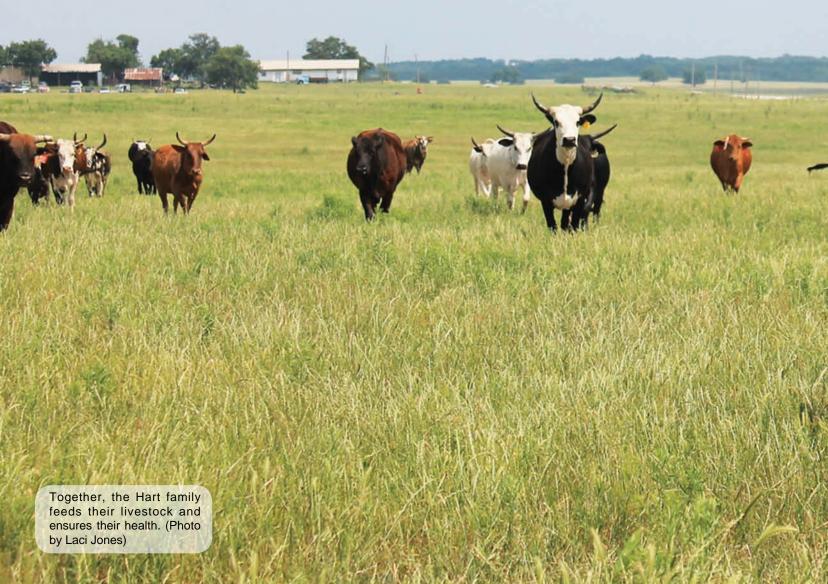




ome of the free because of the brave," you've heard it before, maybe even read it on a shirt. This month I wish to honor and recognize our freedom. Our freedom to farm and ranch, our freedom to speak and our freedom to express ourselves openly through appearance! I am so grateful for our freedoms and love patriotic attire. This kimono is the perfect combination of western and patriotism, in my opinion. I love it layered with this striped tank and the new leather patch baseball caps I just got in. Throw this on with your favorite shorts or jeans and celebrate in style! Find this look at www.jessesjewelz.com.

Forever grateful, Jessica Kader Isaiah 6:8







# RIDING BULLS TO RAISING KIDS



J.W. Hart began his bucking bull program in 1995 after his rookie year in the PBR to stay involved in the bucking bull industry after he retired. (Photo by Laci Jones)

rider that spanned more than 15 years, J.W. Hart was the 1994 Professional Bull Riders Rookie of the Year, 2002 PBR World Champion and later started the J.W. Hart Challenge by WC Challenger Charities which takes place each year in Decatur, Texas. However, these days Hart enjoys spending time with his family and raising cattle on their 240-acre ranch in Overbrook, Okla.

"J.W.'s bull riding career is one thing, our marriage is one thing and our kids are one thing, but the connector has been God," said J.W. Hart's wife, LeAnn Hart.

The bull rider was born in Marietta, Okla., in March 1975, with rodeo in his veins. His father rode bulls before Hart was born and shortly after. His mother barrel raced, later becoming a secretary.

Hart tried his hand at calf-roping, barrel racing and goat tying in junior rodeos, but he found his passion in bull riding. Both Hart and his little brother learned how to bull ride from their father from the first time they got on calves.

"My mom and dad would say when I was a kid, 'I swear to God if somebody broke that kid's head open it'd be nothing but bucking bulls coming out of there," he laughed.

Hart was an athlete in the arena as well as on the field. His football coach later told Hart he needed to choose between the two sports. After choosing rodeo as his primary passion, Hart continued to hone his skill as a bull rider.

He idolized bull riders including Donnie Gaye and Lane Frost. In 1986, the young bull rider had the opportunity to practice with Frost, who became the National Finals Rodeo World Champion Bull rider the following year.

"It was pretty cool to practice the same day that Lane Frost was," Hart recalled. "He was my hero. I looked up to him as an idol. You didn't know what he would grow into, even after his death. He's just bigger than life."

Frost had an impact on the 11-year-old, giving him occasional advice and sending him hand-me-down shirts. The shirts were given away, and Hart said he would give anything to have those shirts back.

"What I remember most is the fact, that when I broke it down in later years, [Lane Frost] was telling me really the same thing that my daddy was telling me that I didn't believe," he added. "But when your hero, or your idol, tells you, well, then, it's just the gospel."

Hart knew at a young age he wanted to com-

pete professionally. The PBR was not formed at the time, so he dreamed of competing in the National Finals Rodeo and becoming a world champion bull rider.

"I did know from a really, really young age that what I wanted to be is a bull rider," he added. "I never had dreams or aspirations to be an astronaut, or a doctor or a scientist."

He was too young to remember the first time he rode a bull, but the first time he rode a full-grown bull was memorable for Hart. The 12-year-old bull rider had teeth shoved underneath his eye socket and broke his upper jaw. However, he was resilient and kept improving as a bull rider.

By the time he was 18 years old he was making a name for himself. When the PBR first formed, the qualifying system used today did not exist. Instead, the best in the world as well as new riders were invited, including Hart.

"They didn't have to chase me very far," Hart joked. "All they had to do is look out the window, and I was standing there. That's how I got my start. I got an invite, made the list a few times right off and they let me keep coming back."

One of his first rodeos in the PBR was in **Continued on page 34** 











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# RAISING





(Left to right) J.W. Hart (right) with his son Wacey Hart. He and his wife LeAnn Hart were chosen to be adoptive parents to Wacey Hart in 2008. Makayla Hart (right) was born and adopted a year later. (Photos by Laci Jones)

the old Texas Stadium. He was an alternate who found out he was going to compete the week before. Hart met the buzzer when he rode Voodoo in the first round, attributing the successful ride to the muddy arena.

"Nobody ever really rode that bull ever, and I rode him in the mud," Hart explained. "Probably the mud is why I rode him. He didn't have quite the day he was capable of."

The former professional bull rider said the rides throughout his career have become a blur, but one of his more memorable rides was at the second PBR World Finals in 1995 when he rode a bull named Erkel.

"I remember that one really well," he explained. "It probably wasn't my best ride ever. I know it wasn't the highest score ride ever because it was only 89 points, but it was probably one of my favorite rides."

He said it was one of his favorites because he discussed the upcoming ride with friend, Cody Lambert. When Hart asked Lambert what he thought would be a good way to ride Erkel, he replied, "When the gate opens, just start spurring."

When the gate opened in 1995, Hart immediately started spurring. Looking back, Hart said he rode him that way to say to Lambert, "You told me what to do; I can do it."

Another memorable ride occurred two years later at the Calgary Stampede, where he rode Kodiak. Again, Hart said it was not his highest scoring ride, but only one other bull rider had ever ridden him.

"One of the greatest bull riders of all time, Troy Dunn, was the only guy at the time to ever make the whistle on that bull. I think that was one of my best rides, not just because it was for the \$50,000 bonus that day. It was at my favorite rodeo of all time, and we'd all just come together. That was one of the most memorable moments."

Toward the end of his career as a bull rider, Hart was presented the opportunity to get into broadcast. After he was finished riding for the day, the network was looking for a different perspective from one of the riders, he explained. The bull rider filled in and talked with the commentators about his views on the championship round. The following year, he was offered a job as a broadcaster for the PBR.

"I had enough common sense about me to know that my career was in the later years," he added. "I wasn't feeling good anymore, and my body was starting to not react the way I needed it to.

"Not that I probably couldn't have went another year and fought through it, but I thought if I went on trying that I might miss the window of my next career, next opportunity. I was starting a family, and had somebody else to think about besides myself, so it was kind of a natural progression to do something different."

More than 10 years after his slight career change, Hart is still broadcasting along with

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# RAISING

other former bull riders including Justin McBride and Ty Murray. Being a former bull rider and a broadcaster, Hart said bull riding has evolved in three major aspects including the bulls.

"The best bull then rivals the best bull today, there's no doubt," he began. "The very best ones don't get no better. From middle of the road to the bottom, we got on the best bulls in the world then. But they're nothing, absolutely nothing compared to the bulls that are going today."

The second major change he has seen is the award money. Hart won \$102,000 in his rookie year in 1994, which was a considerable amount at the time, he added. Whereas, he 2016 PBR World Champion, Cooper Davis, won nearly \$1.5 million.

Finally, Hart said bull riding is more mainstream than in '90s. Hart said bull riding was once considered a niche sport, almost a sideshow to other sports.

"Now, our guys are on the covers of Men's Sports Fitness, on the front of the New York Times, and we're getting on national television, and not just the CMT or TNN back when we had to pay for the time. We're on CBS Sports and CBS on a weekly basis," he explained.

Hart decided to focus on his bucking bull program he started in 1995. He started the program toward the beginning of his career because he knew his career as a bull rider would not last forever, but he wanted to still be involved in the industry. Today, he has 55 head of cows that will be bred this year along with approximately 60 head of bulls. All cattle at the ranch are for sale, he added.

"Our cows make bucking bulls for bull ridings," he stated. "We take care of cows that make calves to go to bull ridings. When we work cattle, we're working bucking bulls."

In January of 2015, he began preparing to make a comeback in the arena for Unfinished Business, where eight former PBR bull riders came out of retirement to compete in Decatur, Texas.

"I wanted to make a point because my son had been asking me, 'Dad, I want to see you ride a bull," he explained. "I told him, 'I don't ride bulls no more.' I showed him [videos] on YouTube, and he didn't think that was fit. He wanted to see me ride a bull."

Hart was planning on getting on a bull in the practice bull so his son Wacey could see him, when he got an offer for Unfinished Business. He said it was an opportunity to "kill two birds with one stone." Wacey could see him ride while also making his last stand as a bull rider.

"I figured if I was going to do it, it was time to show my son that if you want to do something, you've got to put out the effort," he added.

To set an example for his children, Hart trained for four months with a personal trainer and was on a strict diet. He said he was in the best physical shape of his career when he and Chris Shivers won Unfinished Business, splitting the \$160,000 payout.

When asked if Wacey was satisfied with seeing him ride, Hart replied, "I think so. He better be because I ain't doing it again."

Hart's wife, LeAnn supported him throughout his career as a bull rider, broadcaster and rancher. He first met his wife of nearly 12 years through mutual friends, each dating different people. LeAnn joked that her first thought of Hart was "he was a butt."

"We were very competitive," LeAnn added. "We had a crawfish eating contest, and I beat him. He'll say it different, but I did."

They did not cross paths for a



The Harts completed their family nearly two years ago, adopting Elsie Hart (left) last year. (Photo by Laci Jones)

couple of years until a bull riding in Tampa, Fla., Hart explained. The two started dating and were married in 2005. The Harts began trying for a family soon after, but were unable to carry a baby to full-term.

"We have 11 babies in heaven," LeAnn explained. "So, we got a little football team up there."

They prayed over their options and explored adoption. In 2008, they were chosen to be parents and Wacey Hart was born in March 2009. A year later, Makayla Hart was born and the Harts adopted her.

Two years ago in September, the Harts got a call about a two-year-old local baby who needed a home. It took nine months to finalize the adoption of Elsie Hart. The Harts have been able to keep an open adoption with all of the parents they have adopted from.

They have also been foster parents for the last eight years, recently taking a break. A year ago, they took in a local teenage boy. LeAnn said they have not adopted him and he is not a foster child, but instead a local boy who needed a family.

As for the future, Hart joked that he would like to "make a gazillion dollars, retire and do what I want every day."

In reality, the former professional bull rider said he lives the life he has always dreamed. The Harts said God has blessed them with healthy kids, a beautiful home on a ranch in southern Oklahoma.

"I'd like to say that next week I might change my mind and want to start surfing, but I don't see that happening," he added. "It's bull riding. It's always been bull riding."

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Total time: 30 minutes

Serves: 6-8 Ingredients

## • 2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 8 tablespoons cold, unsalted butter
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 tablespoon salted butter, melted

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Sift flour, baking powder, sugar and salt into a large mixing bowl. Transfer to a food processor. Cut butter into cubes and add to flour, then pulse 6 or 7 times until the mixture resembles rough crumbs.

Alternatively, cut butter into flour in the mixing bowl using a grater, fork or a pastry cutter. Return dough to bowl, add buttermilk and stir with a fork until it forms a rough ball (don't worry if it is a little sticky). Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and roll it into a rough rectangle, about an inch thick. Fold it over and gently roll it down again. Repeat 6 times.

Gently roll out the dough some more, so that it forms a rectangle. Cut dough into biscuits using a floured glass or biscuit cutter. Do not twist cutter when cutting; this will crimp the edges of the biscuit causing them to not rise. If you have scraps just reform a rectangle and cut additional biscuits.

Place biscuits on a baking sheet and bake until golden brown, approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Serves 6 to 8.0%

# WHERE THE PAVED ROAD ENDS

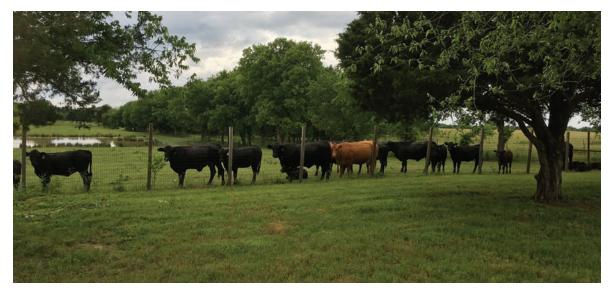
ate one night we were lying in bed watching a movie on television. The TV popped, crackled and began smoking! My husband, wearing nothing but his tighty whitey's, picked up the big bulky TV and headed for the front door. I held the door open for him, and he ran the TV out to the curb. As he turned to run back into the house, I shut and locked the door and turned on the porch light.

He whispered as loud as he could "Open the door! Open the door, this isn't funny!" I whispered back, "It is. It is funny!" He wouldn't get loud because he didn't want to wake the neighbors or the kids.

Before cell phones, entertainment was a little different; it was spontaneous. You didn't have to worry about being caught on camera and posted on the internet for all to see. The information highway has certainly opened a whole new world. And, as they say, if you read it online it's probably true.

Social media affects the way we view everyday life. When something makes you sad, mad or glad, you reach out to your friends through posting on social media. Social media even has its own language that has caught on in everyday conversations. LOL means "Laughing out Loud," SMH is "Shaking My Head," and PSA is "Public Service Announcement."

After reading online, "15 minutes of laughter burns 35 calories" and the article "Jogging After Menopause" by I. Leeka Little, I've decided, the best way to rid myself of these unwanted pounds is to be aggressive in finding something to laugh about. When



Cattle are always audience members when it comes to all the daily activities at the farm. (Photo by Beth Watkins)

something makes me LOL, I want others to LOL with me.

I just posted a picture of my feet wearing two different pink house shoes. I had been busy all morning doing chores, I went to change my shoes before heading out the door for the grocery store, looked down and as soon as I saw it, I snapped a pic because this is too funny not to share. Before I even got out the door, my friends had already begun laughing with me. My husband bet me that I would find another pair just like them in the closet. That was a simple PSA, since laughter burns calories.

Somedays I just wish a camera crew could follow me around because there are just too many moments to post. Even buying groceries produces all sorts of worthy PSA moments. Upon entering "Wally World," I was quickly reminded an "in public appropriate" dress code no longer exists. I don't know whether to LOL or SMH.

Her shopping cart was just rounding the flour tortilla display. Her bright purple hair was pulled up in a ponytail, and she was squeezed into a pair of cheetah print leggings topped off with a "natty light" cropped off t-shirt. It's hard not to stare at a train wreck; I concentrate on my grocery list and head on down the aisle.

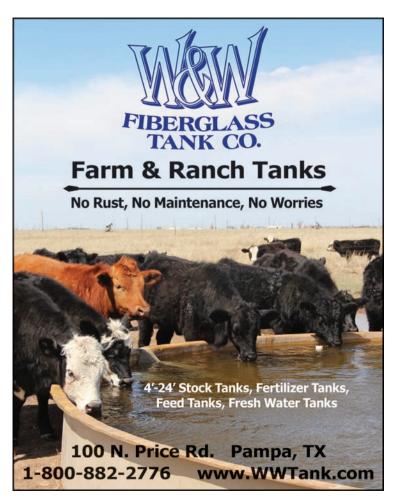
I encountered an elderly lady with her lighted magnifying glass tied around her neck with a shoe string. She asked me if I've ever used "this brand" of cinnamon before. I said, "Yes, but I think the most important thing is the expiration date." I looked at her spice and showed her it's good until October 2020. She then punched me in the arm and with a toothless smile said, "I'm 92. Expiration dates don't mean squat to me." For a 92-year-old woman, she's still pretty strong; my arm might be bruised.

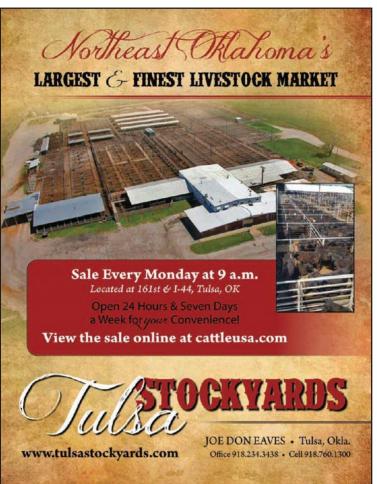
A few aisles later a man wearing too many gold necklaces and

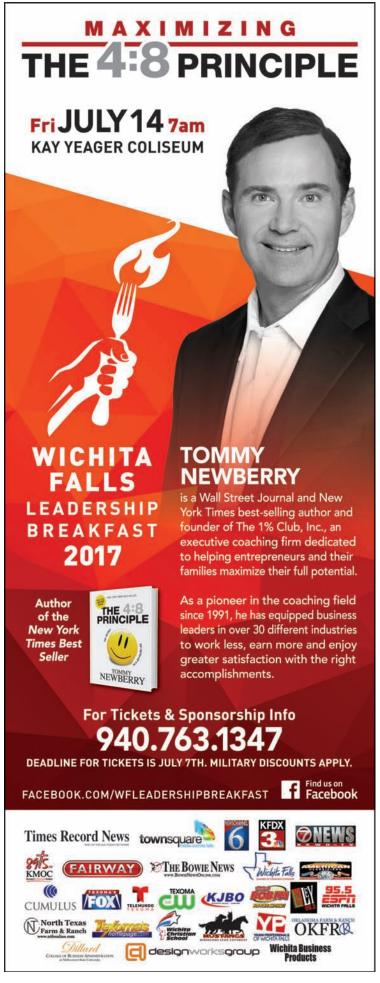
way too much cologne asked me if I knew where he could find some sugar. I smiled and told him in the baking section three aisles over. While driving home, I resisted the urge to turn around for a pic of a white toilet next to the road, with a sign that read, "Crapper 4 sell, one owner."

Back at the house, I'm unloading groceries and counting that as physical exercise—not really burning calories, just building muscle. I try to carry in all my groceries in one trip. With plastic bag handles stacked up my arms, I lift my foot to kick the truck door shut, and my canned goods fall through the bag.

While trying to catch them, I lost my balance and, well, I ended up with my own little train wreck scattered on the ground. I pouted just a minute and heard a familiar sound. I looked over and discovered I had an audience. Our herd of mamas is standing at the fence watching. They don't know whether to LOL or SMH.







## FREEDOM ITS OWN WAY

By Rhonda Shephard

Preedom, Okla., in Woods County is a special kind of town that does things its own way. Located five miles west of Alva, the self-proclaimed "Queen of the Cimarron," this charming little town is worth a day trip to far northwest Oklahoma.

An area steeped in history, Freedom is near Turkey Creek, the scene of the last known fight between the Cavalry and Plains Indian Tribes in 1878. Part of the Cherokee Strip run in 1893, Freedom became a certified city in 1925 and holds the distinction of Oklahoma's smallest certified city. Pulling into the city limits of Freedom, visitors do a double take.

For a brief, unforgettable moment you'll swear you've been transported into the 19th century or a western movie set. Buildings on Freedom's main street are clad in timber planking, and if not for the cars parked in front, you'd question your time and location. Streets reflect the western historical flair of Lasso Lane, Cimarron Pass, Frontier Lane, Dusty Trail, and Saddle Horn Way. Freedom is more than a great photo-op.

August will be a great time to visit Freedom for the Annual Freedom Rodeo and Old Hand Reunion. This year marks the 80th anniversary the third weekend in August on August 17 through the 19. Along with all the color and excitement of an open rodeo, activity includes a chuck wagon dinner, a rodeo dance, a fine art and western craft show, cattle drive and the highlight of the event, the Great Freedom Bank Robbery and Shootout held on Main Street.

If you ignore the vehicles, you'll believe you've been trans-



Buildings like this old jailhouse transports visitors to the late 19th century. (Courtesy photo)

ported back to a rustic cowtown and a band of desperadoes with no good intent.

For more information on the rodeo phone 580-621-3276. The town of 300 residents swells to thousands during this event.

The Freedom Museum tells the tale of the settling of the Cimarron Valley. Located at 505 Main Street, the museum is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, closed Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. For information call 580-621-3533.

Want to get out and away to a place you'd never expect in Oklahoma? Try the Selman Living Laboratory and Observatory. This field research and teaching facility provides multiple natural environments and is recognized as a Natural Heritage Site by the Oklahoma Biological Survey with its10-foot electrically driven observatory to search the starry-filled Oklahoma sky. Contact the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/UCOSelmanLivingLab for events and times.

Want a family fun activity? Try Brandt's Menagerie five miles from Freedom. This petting zoo consists of 20 different species including chickens, turkeys, ducks, miniature donkeys, rabbits, sheep, highland cattle, a water buffalo, yak, alpacas, zebra, emus, camels and micro pigs. Visits started in March. It is located three miles west of Alva on highway 64. Call 580-430-1269 or check our Facebook page at www.facebook. com/bradtsmenagerie for the most up-to-date schedule and information.

No visit to Freedom is complete without a visit to Alabaster Caverns, the world's largest alabaster cave.

Located four miles south of Freedom, it provides an adventure including a million bats, the area hiking, camping, RV parking, wildlife viewing and the Stables resort.

Visiting Freedom is an exercise in stepping back to a slower time. The community is located on the Great Plains Trails designated by the Oklahoma Scissortail Flycatcher.

Freedom offers an opportunity for small town eateries known for great home cooking, charming bed and breakfasts, and beautiful northwest Oklahoma scenery often overlooked when travel opportunities are considered.

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- Wide 79" Pick Up Width
- New Narrow Transport Design

- Efficient Fork Feeder Intake System
- 64 HP\* Minimum Power Requirement
- PowerBind Net Wrap Provides Fast, Reliable and Productive Bale Wrapping



## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **JUNE 24-JULY 2**

NATIONAL REINING HORSE DERBY, Oklahoma City Fair Park. Oklahoma City, OK 73107. The 2017 National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Derby & Show will award more than half a million dollars to the winners. Come see the best four, five and six-year-old reining horses in the world. The National Reining Horse Derby is one of two major events presented by the NRHA each year in Oklahoma City. For more information, visit www.nrhaderby.com.

#### **JULY 1-SEPT. 16**

## CHISHOLM TRAIL 150TH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBIT,

Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center. Enid, OK 73644. Celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail with an exciting new exhibit at the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center in Enid. Step inside the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation Gallery and learn about the greatest of cattle trails. Guests can also immerse themselves in the stories of the Trail as they sit around the camp fire. Visitors can enjoy a lonely cowboy's tune while standing on the former grand ole trail. Visit www.csrhc. org for more information.

### **JULY 1-4**

**TULSA HOLIDAY SUMMER** CIRCUIT, Tulsa Expo Square. Tulsa, OK 74114. The Tulsa Holiday Summer Circuit is at the Ford Livestock Complex and is an equestrian event not to be missed. Featuring junior, senior and amateur Western pleasure and trail riding, as well as high point and amateur roping among other classes, the Tulsa Holiday Summer Circuit includes a wide variety of activities that showcase the skills of both the horse and rider. Watch the graceful, well-groomed horses and talented riders as they display their abilities for the crowds. Visit www.tulsaholidaycircuit.com.



### **JULY 1-4**

### **HUCKLEBERRY FESTIVAL,**

Jay, OK 74346. Hop on over to Jay for the city's annual Huckleberry Festival and celebrate the wild huckleberries that thrive in the area on July 1-4. The unique berry, more intense in flavor than the common blueberry, has spawned this festival that draws visitors from around the state and beyond. For more information, call 918-253-8698.

### **JULY 1**

### STATE PARKS BIRTHDAY

BASH, Sequoyah State Park. Hulbert, OK 74441. Come to the Three Forks Nature Center and celebrate 80 years of Oklahoma's natural treasures. The State Parks Birthday Bash will include children's crafts and activities, along with cookie decorating stations and plenty of other birthday-themed activities. After the festivities wrap up at the nature center, be sure to explore the miles of trails throughout the park. Call 918-772-2108 for more information.



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## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **JULY 2-4**

WEWOKA LAKE FESTI-VAL, Wewoka Lake. Wewoka, OK 74884. This Fourth of July weekend, bring the family and join the fun at Wewoka Lake for a three-day community festival. Call 405-380-2663 for more information.

#### **JULY 3-4**

**RODEO MIAMI,** 1129 E St. SW. Miami, OK 74354. Travel to Miami for a two-day rodeo event filled with exciting acts. Cheer for your favorite championship rodeo participants as they compete in traditional rodeo events. For more information, visit **www.visitimi-amiok.com**.

### **JULY 4**

STARS & STRIPES CEL-EBRATION, Southeast Expo Center. McAlester, OK 74501. Celebrate Independence Day with a bang at McAlester's Stars & Stripes Funfest. This free, one-day event features live entertainment, inflatable rides, games and a spectacular fireworks display at dusk. For more information, visit www. cityofmcalester.com.

### **JULY 4-9**

NATIONAL LITTLE BRITCH-ES RODEO FINALS, Lazy E Arena. Guthrie, OK 73044. Come on out to the Lazy E Arena on July 4-9. This rodeo is sponsored by the Edmond Convention & Visitors Bureau. Call 405-341-4344 or visit www.visitedmondok.com for more information.

### **JULY 4-8**

AMERICAN SHORTHORN ASSOCIATION JUNIOR NATIONALS, Tulsa Expo Square. Tulsa, OK 74114. For the main event, watch as juniors show their cattle. Visitors can also view art, posters, photography, graphic design and state projects on display for judging. For more information, visit www.shorthorn.org.

#### **JULY 5**

**SOLA SALE,** *Sola Livestock Market. Ada, OK 74821.* Come on out every Wednesday at 9 a.m., where we will be selling calves, yearlings, bulls, pairs and cows. For additional information, visit **www.solallc.com** or call 580-436-5033.

### **JULY 5**

ENLOW RANCH AUCTION, Enlow Ranch. Tulsa, OK 74131. Come on out to our monthly auction. Enlow auction service has more than 50 years of experience. Call 918-224-7676 for more information.

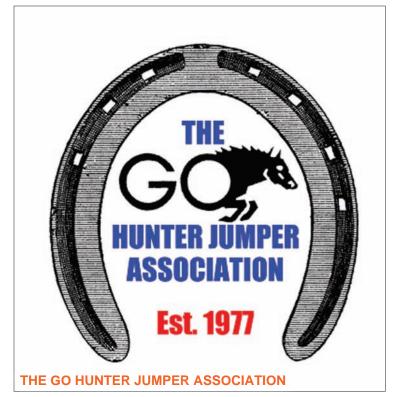
#### **JULY 5-9**

GREATER OKLAHOMA HUNTER JUMPER PREVIEW & HORSE SHOW, Oklahoma State Fair Park. Oklahoma City, OK 73107. Come see riders show off their equestrian skills at the Greater Oklahoma Hunter Jumper Preview & Horse Show in Oklahoma City. With five days of rider and horse preview followed by five days of competition, this exciting display of horses and their training is fun for the entire family. For more information visit www.goshow.org.

### **JULY 6-8**

### WYNNEWOOD IPRA RODEO,

Wynnewood Rodeo Grounds. Wynnewood, OK 73098. This rodeo has been drawing visitors to the Wynnewood Rodeo Grounds for over 50 years. Traditional rodeo events include barrel racing, calf roping, bull riding, team roping, bronc riding and the all-new cowgirl breakaway roping. Meet Miss Rodeo USA, the "Sweetheart of the Rodeo," and stick around for mutton bustin,' a calf scramble and bull dogging, nightly at the local rodeo grounds. At the rodeo, merchandise vendors and food booths will also be available on-site. For more information, call 405-665-2307.



### **JULY 7-9**

ALL STAR TEAM ROPING FINALS, Tulsa Expo Square, Tulsa, OK 74114. Gather at Tulsa Expo Square for a weekend watching the All-Star Team Roping Finals. Team members working hand-in-hand to progress through the Preliminary and Invitational Roping events with the championship title and cash earnings on the line. Cheer your team on as they seek to beat out other ropers for top prizes. For more information, visit 918-798-0159.

### **JULY 9-14**

INTERNATIONAL FINALS YOUTH RODEO, Heart of Oklahoma Expo Center. Shawnee, OK 74804. The International Finals is the ultimate rodeo for up-and-coming cowboys and cowgirls. Bring the whole family out to watch events including barrel racing, pole bending, breakaway roping, goat tying, team roping, calf roping, steer wrestling, bull riding, saddle bronc riding and bareback riding. For more information, visit www.ifyr.com.

### **JULY 15**

### STRATFORD PEACH FESTI-

VAL, Stratford City Park. Stratford, OK 74872. The Stratford Peach Festival is family entertainment at its finest. The festival takes place in the self-professed "Peach Capital of Oklahoma," and will feature a variety of activities including live entertainment, arts and craft vendors, street games, helicopter rides and more. Pick up a bushel of fresh peaches from one of seven area orchards or simply enjoy a delicious serving of homemade peach ice cream.

#### **JULY 22**

CUDD ANNUAL PRODUCTION & CONSIGNMENT SALE, Woodward, OK 73801. Rain or shine, come out to the Cudd Quarter Horses Annual Production & Consignment. The sale features two-year-olds from one of the strongest ranching and working horse bloodlines in country. More than 60 two-year-olds will sell. For more information, visit www.cuddquarterhorsesllc.com.

# Clanton's Cafe

By Laci Jones

he state of Oklahoma is one of only two states to have a state meal. The Oklahoma state meal consists of fried okra, cornbread, barbecue pork, squash, biscuits, sausage and gravy, grits, corn, strawberries, chicken fried steak, pecan pie and black-eyed peas.

While this may be too much food for one meal, I set out to find an Oklahoma restaurant that not only serves this meal but does it well. I came across a restaurant tucked away in the northeast corner of Oklahoma.

Located on Route 66 in Vinita, Okla., is Clanton's Café, which has been open since the early 20th century. Grant "Sweet Tator" Clanton opened the Busy Bee Café in 1927.

"Sweet Tator was known for coming out and banging a pot with a spoon to announce to the town locals that lunch was ready," according to the Clanton's Café website. "The local merchants would then close their books and head to the Busy Bee to dine."

The first Clanton's Café opened in 1930, but Cleve and Ma Clanton moved the café to its current location on Illinois Street in 1947. Ownership of the café changed hands throughout the years. Melissa Clanton-Patrick and Dennis Patrick have been operating the historical restaurant since 1997.

Bringing my appetite, I made the drive on historic Route 66 and arrived at the forest green building with Clanton's Café scripted in bright yellow. The vertical neon "Eat" sign made me nostalgic for a different decade.

The restaurant, with the exception of the restrooms, did not appear to have changed much since



Clanton's Cafe, located on Route 66, features a large neon sign. (Photos by Laci Jones)

the '80s. The restaurant was quaint with wood paneling, deep red booths and framed old newspaper clippings hung on the wall. The old photos of downtown Vinita, Okla., along with a mounted ram and boar head that gave the restaurant character.

According to the menu, the recipes have not changed much since Sweet Tator opened the Busy Bee Café. The potatoes are peeled and cut by hand and the pies are made from scratch.

The café serves every home-

made comfort food imaginable from soups and stews to grilled ham and cheese to home-style pot roast. I immediately knew that someone would have to roll me out of the restaurant after my meal.

I first heard about the restaurant from watching an episode on "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives," where Guy Fieri ordered his first calf fries. Not many restaurants in Oklahoma serve this delectable appetizer, so I had to start with an order of their hand-breaded calf fries served with horseradish

sauce and cocktail sauce.

As soon as my date popped a calf fry in his mouth, all he could say was, "the breading," which meant he loved them. I am not sure what all ingredients went into the breading, but it was perfection. They were bite-sized, crispy and paired well with both sauces. The calf fries were some of the best I have ever tried and began eating the calf fries like potato chips.

My date ordered the chicken fried chicken sandwich after he saw a waitress carry the dish to another table. The sandwich included a fried chicken breast with lettuce, sliced tomato and mayo on a toasted ciabatta bun. Homemade chips were served on the side. If I hadn't been on a mission to have their chicken fried steak, I would have ordered the exact same meal.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to taste a chip because he ate the meal in three minutes flat. He then talked about making the drive the following week just to order the same thing. I think we can all assume he enjoyed the meal.

Looking to eat at least part of the state meal, I ordered their "famous" chicken fried steak with country gravy, homemade mashed potatoes and green beans. With the choice of the soup of the day or a salad, I couldn't resist ordering the broccoli cheese soup. The cup of broccoli cheese soup was thick and cheesy.

My dilemma with ordering chicken fried steak at restaurants is the steak, often pounded too thin to appear larger on the plate. I was pleasantly surprised at how thick the chicken fried steak was at Clanton's Café. The breading of the chicken fried steak was sea-





soned well and complimented the steak. For those reasons, it was one of the best chicken fried steaks I have tasted at a restaurant.

The steak and mashed potatoes were topped with simple peppered gravy, my favorite. The green beans were cooked with large chunks of ham and seasoned with pepper. By the end of the meal, I was stuffed, but I couldn't resist ordering a slice of carrot cake to-go. When

I later opened the box, the cake came from heaven with the cream cheese frosting and a drizzle of caramel. The carrot cake was wonderfule and satisfied my sweet tooth.

If you are looking for a great chicken fried steak or any comfort food, I highly recommend making the trip to Clanton's Café in Vinita, Okla. It is worth the drive. To get a look at the menu in advance, visit www. clantonscafe.com.





# SLOW DOWN IN OKLAHOMA Shawna Russell

By Jan Sikes

hawna Russell and her family have been making music in the great State of Oklahoma since she can remember. Born in Holdenville, Okla., and raised for most of her life in Woody Guthrie's hometown of Okemah, Okla., her roots run deep.

Born in 1978, growing up she never really made the connection between Okemah and Woody Guthrie until she was old enough to realize there was a huge folk festival that drew people from all around the world each year in his honor.

Then, the importance of the town grew. That monumental festival will take place July 12-16 this year. So, if you're anywhere near Okemah, this four-day event is well worth attending. You can see the entire music lineup and schedule at http://www.woodyfest.com.

Russell first sang in public at the age of seven. At the age of thirteen, she and her dad formed a band and then at the age of seventeen, she joined her uncle's band and has been going strong ever since, eventually forming her own group.

Her first new music release in six years, Russell has recently recorded "BackAround." It is a collection of seven songs she wrote or co-wrote with her dad and guitarist, Keith Russell, and her uncle, Tim Russell, who also plays bass in her band, "The Ranch Hands."

In a recent interview, she openly shared her thoughts on this new album, family involvement and a television music show broadcast



Music artist Shawna Russell was born in Holdenville, Okla. She recently recorded "BackAround," a collection of seven songs. (Photos by Brendan Carlson)

that she and her family produce.

"This [extended play] is very special," Russell explained. "It's been a long time in the making. You never want to have that long of a time in between projects, but sometimes life just gets in the way and throws you curve balls, and you simply find your way around them. So, we thought that the title was not just a great title for one of the songs on the album, but appropriate because we were bringing my music back around to

the people as well."

The eye-catching cover of this extended play (EP) looks like a fine piece of tooled leather that begs to be touched and was designed by Keith Whitfield at Aartvark Graphic Design, LLC.

"The tooled leather look was what we were going for on the cover," she added. "To me, it represents an art form much like creating music. I write a lot of songs with my dad and uncle, but I also have songs on this album that

I wrote by myself. I'm a fairly new songwriter, so it's always special to me to be able to get my ideas out there on my own and not just have a collaboration, which is also great."

When you listen to this EP, you'll notice that none of the songs sound alike, with the exception of Russell's rich powerhouse voice.

"There is a little bit of everything on this EP," she said. "I'm one of those artists who is hard See RUSSELL page 47

## Russell-

to pin down to a specific style because I tend to vacillate from California Country to Southern Rock."

The family theme runs deep through Russell's music and her life.

"My dad, my uncle and I have been traveling and playing music together since I was seventeen," Russell explained. "Actually, my dad and uncle are celebrating their 50th year of playing music together. It's very special to have that kind of connection with your family and create this musical tradition with them.

"It's something that will stand the test of time. People will be able to listen to this for years to come and hopefully feel the connection we have with one another and with the music. That was what I wanted when I tackled this project."

The seven tracks on this CD are as unique as their creators. The title track, "BackAround" tells of a teen girl in the '70s searching for worldly freedom, but following love back home. It is the quintessential tale of wanderlust and the undeniable urge to return home to the love of family.

When Russell recorded her first project, "Goddess," in 2008, drummer Russ Kunkel played on the session. Kunkel is well known for his work with legends James Taylor and Jackson Browne. It was during this session Russ made the statement that he might someday "retire and slow down in a place like Oklahoma."

A far cry from the busy streets of Los Angeles, it appealed to him. It was from this line that Russell and her uncle, Tim, wrote the song, "Slow Down in Oklahoma." There is much to be said for a slower lifestyle.

"Learn to Live Again" is a song that will speak to anyone trying to make a new start. Russell rocks out on this, but her vocals shine and the message of falling into darkness and trying to find the light and strength to get up and live again come through loud and clear.

The dust bowl has been written about and sung about for many years, but not in the way Russell tells it in "No More Water." It speaks about a betrayal of the worst kind during a critical time.

This EP is music that stays true to her Oklahoma roots and takes you on a journey through a myriad of emotions found in the words and music arrangements of these songs.

But, the family's involvement in producing and promoting music on a grand scale doesn't stop there. The Russell family created a music show on The Country Network (TCN) spotlighting Americana, Texas and Red Dirt music artists. The show is available in nearly 50 million households via DTV, cable networks, ROKU and online streaming.

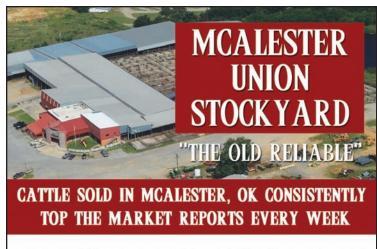
"The show is called 'Our Land-The Music Highway' and is a monthly special that features different artists," she explained. "I usually interview the artists and then have them perform and then I also perform with my family band. It's a great spotlight for those genres of music that get overlooked on some of the other national television shows. It was our desire to help promote these talented artists. That prompted us to create this show."

New episodes air every second Saturday of the month and repeat throughout the month. Check your local guide for show times.

So, folks in Oklahoma, if you aren't already, get acquainted with this musical family and tune into the show.

If you'd like to see Russell in a live performance, her entire touring schedule can be found at www.Russellrussell.com.





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## JUST PEACHY

## The Stratford Peach Festival celebrates the summer season

By Laci Jones



Peach growers from across the state bring their finest peaches to compete for the first place prize. (Photo courtesy of Tricia Wood)

Just like fall activities include picking apples and spring involves picking flowers, peaches are synonymous with summer. Oklahomans will have a chance to celebrate summer at the annual Stratford Peach Festival on the third weekend in July.

Stratford, Okla., the self-proclaimed "Peach Capital of Oklahoma," is the venue for the Stratford Peach Festival, sponsored for the second year by the Stratford Little League Foundation.

The celebration begins on Thursday with a parade at 5:30 p.m. on Main Street in Stratford. The parade is followed by the annual rodeo hosted by the Stratford Round-Up Club. This year marks the 81st year for the rodeo.

"The festival and the rodeo have always been together," said Stratford Peach Festival host. Tricia Wood. "They are kind of intertwined."

The rodeo begins on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. The Stratford Peach Festival 5K Family Fun Run/Walk will be on Saturday, July 15 at 6:30 a.m. Registration will take place at 6 a.m., and costs \$25 to enter.

The Peach Festival at the Stratford City Park is free to enter. The 41st year of the festival officially kicks off at 9 a.m. at the pavilion with the national anthem and recognizing veterans.

All-day entertainment will follow. Wood said the entertainment at this year's festival varies including several local bands, a unicycle performance, a performance with dogs and a performance by the Guthrie Gunfighters. Many church groups will come to the festival to See PEACHY page 50

## PEACHY

sing throughout the day.

"The Stratford Cheer Team will come and perform because they will have just gotten back from cheer camp," she added. "The Chickasaw Nation Stomp Dance Troupe came the last three years and will dance this year, as well."

The dance troupe will perform at 10 a.m., followed by the cook-off and auction at 10:30 a.m. Participants each bring a dish containing at least one peach to be judged.

The cost to enter a dish is \$10 and must be submitted by 9:30 a.m. Prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. The dishes can vary between sweet and savory, she added.

Peach growers will also bring a basket of their finest peach crop to be judged. The peaches will be sold in an auction immediately after the cook-off.

With festival attendance reaching somewhere between 5,000 to 10,000 visitors, the festival also features other games including turtle races and parent/child sack races beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Eight years ago, Stratford citizen Marissa Clark started the Peach Idol competition, according to Wood. At 1 p.m., participants compete in different age groups to become the top singer. Participants need to bring a device with the song they will perform unless performing acapella. The Peach Idol costs \$30 to enter.

"Everyone can participate," Wood added. "Everyone gets to sing one song and the judges decide on the winners of each age group and an overall winner."

A car show at the festival features cars of all makes and models from muscle cars to street rods. The announcement of the car show winners will take place at 3 p.m.

"The car show at the festival has always been a really big deal,"







(Top to bottom) A parade through Main Street in Stratford, Okla., kicks off the festivities. Members of the Peach Royalty represent their community. A peach grower receives second place in the peach competition. (Photos courtesy of Tricia Wood)

she added.

Ladies of all ages compete in the Stratford Peach Royalty pageant starting at 3 p.m. Anyone who is Peach Royalty must be a resident of Stratford, Okla., and cost \$30 to enter. The age divisions for Peach Royalty are the following:

- Peach Bud: Boys ages 2-5 years old
- Peach Blossom: Girls ages 2-5 years old
- Peach Princess: Girls ages 6-9

years old

- Peach Junior Queen: Girls ages 10-13
- Peach Queen: Girls ages 14-18
- Stratford Sweetheart: Women 65+

See PEACHY page 51

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## PEACHY

"Our royalty has done a good job of representing our community," Woods explained. "We were able to get our queen to help with the hosting of the Rush Springs Watermelon Festival. We got to hang out with their queen and spit [watermelon] seeds. It was a lot of fun. Most of our royalty also went to visit the Murray County Tractor Show during their parade."

The festival will also have several vendors serving a variety of food for purchase. Visitors can enjoy the free homemade peach ice cream served all day at the festival.

Visitors can also stop at one of the several peach orchards in the area to purchase peaches.

"A lot of the farmers will sell peaches at their farm, especially if they grow more than just peaches," Woods explained. "Sometimes the farmers will bring peaches to the park, and they will come bright and early at 7 o'clock. It doesn't take long, and they are all gone."

The Stratford, Okla., community is involved throughout the process with the Stratford Fire Department directing parking and the Life Point Church hosting a pancake breakfast from 7 to 9 a.m.

"I love the fact that people come so far to see Stratford and see our festival and be a part of the whole extravaganza," Wood explained. "It's a real special time for our town."

Directions to the Stratford Peach Festival from Highway 177/Highway 19 junction: Head east on Highway 19, turn south on Hyden Avenue, turn east on 8th Street to reach Stratford City Park.

The schedule of the Stratford Peach Festival is subject to change as the festival approaches. To stay up-to-date on the schedule, like the 2017 Peach Festival, Stratford, OK on Facebook.





The Stratford Peach Festival will feature entertainment throughout the day. (Photos courtesy of Tricia Wood)

## CRAWDADS

By Russell Graves

my boy and I headed down to the duck marsh where we hunt. During the winter, the two acre marsh, which was created by my brother out of a flat bottomland hayfield that lies next to a creek, floods with about a foot of water and creates a wetland habitat that attracts ducks on a daily basis.

After duck season, he drains the marsh so moist soil grasses and forbs will grow and provide food for next season's ducks.

When the weather warms and the water drains away, the flat marsh bottom (made from a thick clay gumbo mud for which the blackland prairies are famous) becomes a popular destination for scores of crawdads.

Mud chimneys are everywhere. At each place a chimney stands, a crawdad carefully dug a vertical burrow that fills with water and then capped the opening with the spoils from its labor: chunks of stacked mud.

We find a big chimney and carefully pluck it apart from the mud. In doing so, we expose a wide and nearly symmetrical hole that plunges deep into the marsh's basin. It's so deep, I can't even see a shiny disk of water down in the hole.

However, the dig is fresh so we know a crawdad lurks beneath. So with bacon tied to a string harvested from the end of a feed sack, my boy lowers the bait into the hole and waits for a tug. He doesn't have to wait long.

## Crawfish, crayfish or crawdad?

In the eastern United States, however, they are commonly



called crayfish.

Whatever you call them, crawdads are a species of freshwater crustaceans that live in water that does not completely freeze. As bottom dwellers, they feed off of live animals, carrion, and plant materials. They are an old species, and fossil records document their existence for at least 30 million years.

Worldwide, more than 500 species of crawdads are recognized, 350 of which live in North America. While crawfish are found all over the United States, they are found in greater numbers and species diversity in the southeastern United States in the warmer, wetter areas of the south.

Texas is home to at least 43

different species of crawfish, seven of which are listed either as endangered or threatened. The most pressing concern for Texas crawfish is habitat destruction due to development and pollution of waterways.

Most of the state's species diversity reside in the southeastern portion of the state where the climate is consistently warmer and wetlands are in more abundance. At least two species exist away from wetlands and burrow into the deep soils of the blackland prairies.

These species emerge from the burrows to feed and are equipped to ride out times of drought as they dig their burrow deeper and deeper as they follow a shrinking water table.

"Crawfish are typically located where habitat requirements are met: surface water or reachable water below ground," says Ken Johnson, co-author of the book "Texas Crawdads." "In Texas these are available generally in the central and eastern part of the state."

In western areas, he explains, crawdads are found in streams or reservoirs and in wet weather spots like ditches and nearby watersheds. "Ponds are also populated here and there, but these may be introductions. We have found them, though, all the way to the Caprock in several counties of dry West Texas."

See CRAWDADS page 53

## **CRAWDADS**

"If one must choose a most common species for Texas, the red crawfish (or Louisiana Swamp Crawfish) might fit the bill," Johnson says.

"It is very common in the southern part of the state from east to west and in certain ponds and lakes in the northern part where released by intentional and unintentional stocking."

In Texas, crawdads are a commercially viable crop as they are raised for food consumption and bait. While Louisiana grows most all of the crawfish sold for food consumption, Texas is in second place with some 147,000 pounds produced annually according to the last agriculture census: a document released in 2007 by the United States Department of Agriculture.

At the time of the last census, eight Texas farms were raising crawfish for the table.

With modern aquacultural methods, crawfish are either grown in dedicated ponds and harvested when ready for market, or they are double cropped with rice when it is flooded during the growing season.

Traditionally, crawfish were raised and consumed on a local scale. With the rise in popularity of Cajun inspired foods, more and more of the harvest is packaged and shipped.

While there are a variety of ways to cook crawfish like in étouffée, jambalaya or pie, by far the way most people enjoy crawfish is in the crawfish boil. Essentially, crawfish are boiled in seasonings like peppercorns, allspice, and others, and additional ingredients like corn, potatoes, andouille sausage and garlic are added to the pot.

Like lobster and shrimp, the tails are primarily consumed while some will eat the crawdad's insides as well.



Worldwide, more over 500 species of crawdads are recognized, 350 of which live in North America. (Photo by Russell Graves)

## Going crawfishing - kids and crawdads

One of the joys of crawdads is reconnecting with your past and going crawfishing with kids.

Kimberley Price of Iowa Park fondly describes crawfishing in much the same way other Texans describe it.

"We used bacon tied on fishing line that we tied on a cane pole we had cut down from the ditch bank," says Price. "We sat on the wooden gates of the irrigation ditch and put the ones we caught in a five gallon bucket. Then when we caught all we wanted, we would pour them into an old red wagon and sell them to the guys driving through Valley View on their way to set trot lines in Lake Kickapoo or Lake Arrowhead."

Her memories of crawfishing are echoed by most with whom I've visited. They are universally fond memories of childhood. So with that in mind, I often gear up and help my kids build memories.

The ingredients for crawfishing are simple: bacon or bologna, a string, and a place where crawdads exist. I take my kids in the duck marsh and to the margins of farm ponds in northeast Texas.

The hardest part of our trips is finding a burrow with a big enough hole in which we can drop the bait. Therefore, when we search for crawdads, we make sure that we remove the chimneys, and we are careful to put them back in place if the hole is too small.

Once we find an adequate hole, bait is dropped and before long, the white string goes taut and the low intensity tug of war is on.

Fighting a crawfish is a practice in patience and finesse. The tug of war usually takes a while to win. If you don't pull hard enough, the crawdad plants its numerous legs into the mud and digs in to protect his new meal.

Pull too hard and you jerk the bait right out of its claws. It's a

skill you learn from experience and feel.

At first my boy can't get the hang of it as he keeps pulling the bait away from the crawdad. Thirty minutes later he's still in the hole.

Soon, however, we can see the bait near the burrow's entrance and clamped to it are two crawdad pincers. The crawfish is trying hard to put on the brakes with his many pairs of legs, but he's too interested in the raw strip of bacon to let go.

After the bait and claws breech the surface, we can see its dark, bb sized eyes looking up at us. When he spots us, he lets go of the bait and retreats.

Hunger pangs are a strong motivator and within seconds, he's gripping the bacon that my son dropped back in the hole. The fight is back on. I don't know if the crawdad is tired, hungry or both, but when he emerges this time, he doesn't spook. When I reach down to pick him up by the shell, he does his best to reach back and pinch me with his claws.

At first my nine-year-old is apprehensive about holding his first crustacean as he's afraid of the pinch. I let the crawdad pinch me first to let him see that it doesn't hurt. I set the crawdad down on the mud and it instinctively turns to face me with its claws up in defense.

While I distract him, my son picks him up for a closer inspection. He's proud of his quarry.

He's so proud he puts the crawdad back in the mud right next to the water. The crawdad scoots backwards accelerated by the tail flip that he uses to swim and escape predators and is soon back in the water. When we are gone, he'll crawl from the water and dig a new burrow.

## OKLAHOMA STATE PARKS

## Lake Texama State Park

By Laci Jones

arm breeze, cool water, flip flops and sunscreen. Summertime has officially arrived in Oklahoma. As Oklahoma's second largest lake with more than 89,000 acres of water, Lake Texoma is a popular destination to enjoy the summer season and unwind, said Lake Texoma State Park manager, Julie Roach.

"Lake Texoma State Park is a great location to connect with family and friends, disconnect with work and unplug electronics," she explained. "It's a good place to get out your fishing pole, build a campfire, make s'mores, play horseshoes, washers, or other favorite activities or just relax in your lawn chair."

While the area is popular during the summer, Roach said Lake Texoma State Park is a popular destination in early spring and late fall. The name of the state park originated from its location on the Oklahoma-Texas border near Kingston, Okla.

Lake Texoma is fed by the Red River and the Washita River, she said. Before the inception of the state park, the Denison Dam on Lake Texoma was built during World War II to control flooding from the two river sources. The dam was completed in January 1944.

The lake was initially authorized for flood control, hydropower, and water supply. Nearly 44 years after the dam was constructed, recreation was officially added as a "project purpose" of the lake.

"Since the lake is a flood control lake, it is affected by flooding



Lake Texoma, the second largest lake, is fed by the Red River and the Washita River. (Courtesy photo)

and has crested the spillway a total of five times," Roach added.

While the lake has experienced flooding, it is also affected by years of drought. Roach said some of the communities that were abandoned to create the lake can be seen during periods of extremely low lake levels.

Approximately 1,882 acres of land were leased from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to open Lake Texoma State Park. The state park opened in 1951, followed by the lodge six years later. Since then, two golf courses have been added—the Texoma Golf Course and the Chickasaw Pointe Golf Course.

The Texoma Golf Course

opened across the road from the Texoma Lodge. The Chickasaw Point Golf opened across the road from the Texoma Park and Resort on Highway 70, according to Roach.

"Due to issues involving infrastructure failure and aging facilities, the decision was made to privatize the areas surrounding the Texoma Lodge and both golf courses," Roach explained. "These areas have been purchased and are now owned by others—the Chickasaw Nation and Pointe Vista Development."

The Texoma Lodge and Texoma Golf Course closed in 2006, and both were later demolished. The Chickasaw Pointe Golf

Course is still open to the public and operated by Pointe Vista Development.

Today, Lake Texoma State Park operates approximately 900 acres including three campground areas. These campground areas consist of 150 tent sites and 187 RV sites equipped with water, sewer and electrical hookups.

At Lake Texoma State Park, visitors can enjoy a wide variety of recreational activities including fishing, hiking, biking, boating and sightseeing.

"The shoreline around Lake Texoma State Park is user-friendly," she added. "Boat ramps are located at convenient locations to launch boats. Boaters often pull their boat up on the bank near their campsite."

The state park also has a swimming beach and 1.6-mile round trip hiking trail.

The nature center at the state park is available for visitors during business hours. Group pavilions and rally pavilions accommodating larger groups are also available for any event.

"These pavilions are often used for family reunions, weddings, company parties and other group gatherings," Roach explained. "They are available for rent through the park office."

Several lease concessions have operated in the park throughout the years including the Catfish Bay Marina, Texoma Riding Stables, Texoma Snow-Cones and the Texoma Fun Track.

The marina includes a gas dock, a marina shop for boat maintenance, slip rentals, a con-



The Denison Dam was built to control flooding and was completed in January 1944. The dam has crested the spillway a total of five times. (Courtesy photo)

venience store as well as pontoon and canoe rentals. The Catfish Bay Marina Guide Service, out of the Catfish Bay Marina, will book individual and group fishing trips, she added.

"We are hopeful that we will be able to upgrade our camping facilities, playground facilities, and other recreations amenities in the future as funding allows," Roach concluded.

For more information on Lake Texoma State Park, call 580-564-2566.

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Clusters of small yellow flowers appear on Yellow Sweet Clover from April through July. (Photo courtesy of the Noble Research Institute)

haracteristics: Yellow sweet clover is an annual, cool-season forb introduced into the United States from Europe and Asia. Yellow sweet clover can reach to more than six feet in height. It commonly grows along roadsides and areas where the soil has been disturbed. Its leaves are alternate on the stem, and like many true clovers (*Trifolium spp.*), each leaf consists of three leaflets. The leaflets are generally oblanceolate (baseball bat shaped), and the margins of each leaflet are lined with saw tooth-like projections. Clusters of small yellow flowers appear at the tips of the stems from April through July, and seeds appear in pods containing one seed. Yellow sweet clover and its cousin, white sweet clover (Melilotus albus), have a characteristic sweet odor.

**Area of Importance:** Yellow sweet clover is found throughout Oklahoma in a variety of soils with partial to full sunlight. Patches or infestations of yellow sweet clover are most common along periodically mowed roadsides or ignored agricultural fields. Yellow sweet clover is an invasive species in some areas where it has been introduced, shading and outcompeting native species.

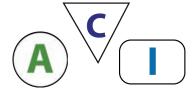
Attributes: Yellow sweet clover can provide good

forage for livestock. It has huge biomass production potential and forage quality that, with proper management, is similar to that of alfalfa.

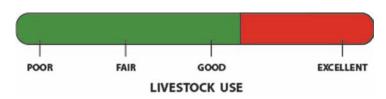
However, when grazing or haying yellow sweet clover, producers should be cautious of molding plants or hay, as this can lead to sweet clover poisoning in cattle. Yellow sweet clover is a legume commonly used in cover crops. The good or bad news: its residue releases allelopathic chemicals during decomposition, which prohibits the growth of other plant species. Yellow sweet clover is a major source of nectar for native and domestic bees and other pollinating insects. Domestic honey bee hives near sweet clover can yield up to 200 pounds of honey in a year. The leaves and stems of yellow sweet clover are also a good deer food.

**Management:** In situations where yellow sweet clover is considered invasive, it can be managed by hand pulling, mowing, prescribed burning or herbicide (2,4-D) treatment before flowering.

Reference: Yellow Sweetclover & White Sweetclover. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\_DOCU-MENTS/nrcs144p2\_043029.pdf ♥↓











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## **PARTING SHOT**



## Wander Often, Wonder Always

Enjoying a day off work, photographer Kathie Freeman traveled from her hometown of Yukon, Okla., up north past Okarche, Okla. She recently purchased a new 50mm lens for her camera and took the opportunity to test it out. "I took a lot of pictures of flowers and landscapes. The flowers turned out the best." (Photo by Kathie Freeman)

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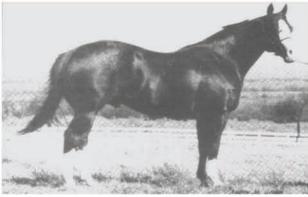


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