NORTH TEXAS FARM & RANCH

NTFR

November 2026



MADE TO BE WORN

Keylie and Brett Tatum

FREE



GET MORE DONE FOR LESS.

CURRENT PROMOTION | + | **UP TO $500 OFF OR 1 YEAR OF COVERAGE*** | + | **10% OFF ACCESSORIES***

Find your local dealer.

©2026 Bombardier Recreational Products Inc. (BRP). All rights reserved. ®, ™ and the BRP logo are trademarks of BRP or its affiliates. In the U.S.A., products are distributed by BRP US Inc. Offers valid in U.S.A. only between August 18, 2026 to August 31, 2027. The conditions may vary depending on your location and this offer is subject to termination or change at any time without notice. This offer is not refundable, exchangeable or transferable (including from one dealership to another), cannot be redeemed for cash, credit or other products of equivalent value. Null where prohibited by law. Until supplies last. Offer can be combined with regular retail promotion rebate. Eligible units are all new and unused 2026-2027 Can-Am Defender, Commander and Outlander models, excluding X mr packages. † Qualified Agricultural and commercial consumers can choose between (1) an additional discount up to $500 depending on the model on top of the regular retail promotion OR (2) 24 months of coverage on select 2026-2027 Can-Am Defender, Commander and Outlander models: The buyer of an eligible model will receive 12 months of BRP Limited Warranty AND 12 months of B.E.S.T. coverage. Florida residents are eligible to receive 24 months of BRP limited warranty. Subject to the exclusions, limitations of liabilities, and all other terms and conditions of BRP's standard limited warranty contract, including without limitation the exclusions of damages caused by abuse, abnormal use or neglect. B.E.S.T. service contract is subject to a $50 deductible on each repair. For complete details, please see the BRP limited warranty and the B.E.S.T. contract. The 10% off Accessories offer is only valid on Can-Am ATV & SSV models purchased through the Ag/Commercial program. Valid in-store at participating, authorized BRP dealers only. BRP e-commerce excluded. Items backordered or not available within promo period are excluded. Not refundable, exchangeable, or transferable (including from one dealership to another) and cannot be redeemed for cash or products of equivalent or similar value. Other conditions may apply, see your authorized dealer for more details. See your dealer or call the ATV Safety Institute at 1-800-887-2887 (USA) or the Canadian Safety Council at 1-613-739-1535 (Canada). ATV and SSV can be hazardous to operate. Never exceed the ATV-SSV's passenger capacity. All adult model ATV are meant to be used by drivers of age 16 and older. Carefully read the vehicle's operator's guide. Follow all instructional and safety material and observe applicable laws and regulations. ATV and SSV are for off-road use only; never ride on paved surfaces or public roads. For your safety, the operator and passenger(s) must wear a helmet, eye protection and applicable protective clothing. Always remember that riding and alcohol/drugs don't mix. Never engage in stunt driving. Avoid excessive speed and be particularly careful on difficult terrain. Always ride responsibly and safely. See your authorized BRP dealer for details and visit www.can-am.brp.com.

can-am®



BEST CHRISTMAS TOWN
Newsweek
READERS' CHOICE
2024
#1 GRAPEVINE, TEXAS

BEST CHRISTMAS TOWN
Newsweek
READERS' CHOICE
2026
#1 GRAPEVINE, TEXAS

More than 1,400 events in 40 days

including:

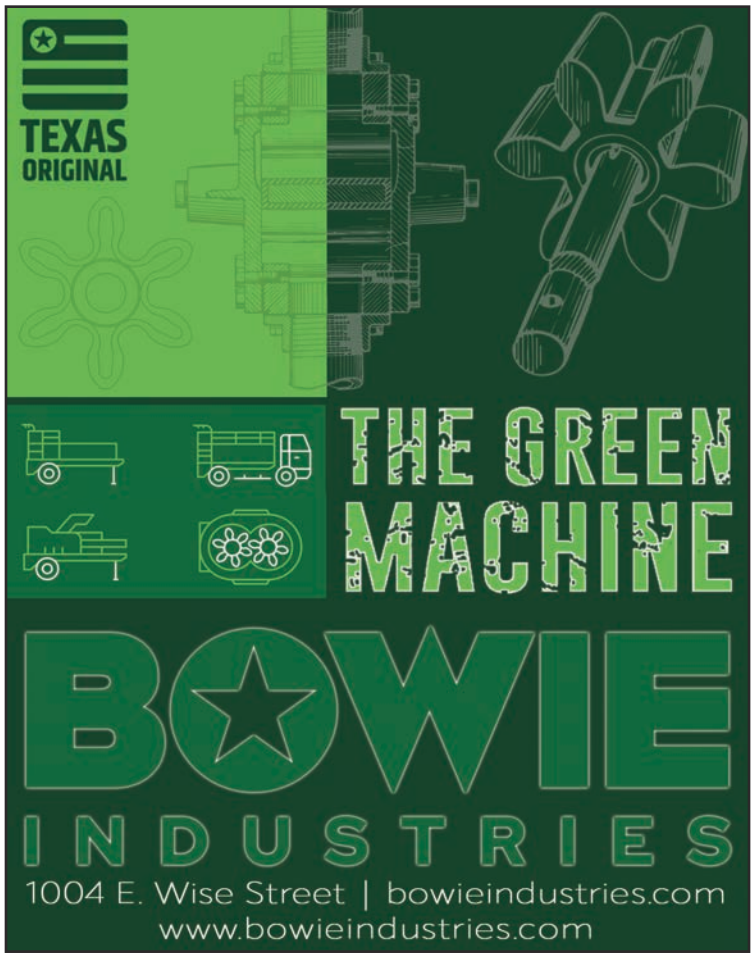
ice! at Gaylord Texan Resort • Peace Plaza Ice Rink • Christmas concerts & movies • Shop & Dine at Grapevine Mills & Historic Main Street • Enormous Christmas displays & decorations

SCAN HERE

FOR INFO

Visit **ChristmasCapitalofTexas.com** for all the details and to plan your **Christmas Getaway** in Grapevine.





FULTON'S
METAL & HARDWARE

940-898-1423 | 3100 FORT WORTH DRIVE | DENTON, TX 76205

STEEL NEW & USED | CULVERTS | R-PANELS & BUILDING SUPPLIES | FENCING & ACCESSORIES | WELDING SUPPLIES

SERVING RANCHERS, FARMERS & CONTRACTORS ACROSS NORTH TEXAS

DELIVERY AVAILABLE • COMPETITIVE PRICING • KNOWLEDGEABLE SERVICE YOU CAN COUNT ON

NORTH TEXAS FARM & RANCH
NTFR
Volume 14, Issue 11

publishing

PUBLISHER
JM Winter

EDITOR
Savannah Magoteaux
editor@ntfronline.com

production

ART DIRECTOR
Rosie Cole
rosie@postoakmedia.net

advertising executives

Kathy Miller
kathy@postoakmedia.net

Rosemary Stephens
rosemary@postoakmedia.net

Kelly Howard
kellyh@postoakmedia.net

distribution

MANAGER
Brenda Bingham
accounting@postoakmedia.net

contribution

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Norman Winter
Annette Bridges
Tony Dean
Jelly McClellan
Jared Groce
Lindsey Monk
Bryce Angell
Laura Nelson
Laura Brenner

DISTRIBUTORS
Pat Blackburn
Paul Evans

administration

Brenda Bingham
accounting@postoakmedia.net

CONTACT US

North Texas Farm & Ranch magazine
200 Walnut St., Bowie, TX 76230
940-872-5922, www.ntfronline.com

in association with

POST OAK MEDIA

NTFR and Post Oak Media are not responsible for omissions or information that has been misrepresented to the magazine. Advertisers and its agencies assume all liability for advertising content. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission from the publisher is prohibited. The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the magazine or its employees.

ON THE COVER



Brett and Keylie Tatum, pictured with their son Pecos, carry on their family's rodeo legacy through Tres Rios Silver. (Photo courtesy of Tres Rios)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



The days are getting shorter, the temperatures are finally beginning to cool, and with Daylight Saving Time coming to an end, we'll soon be turning our clocks back an hour. Of course, that extra hour of sleep sounds nice, but it also means it'll be getting dark before many of us even make it home from work. For those with livestock to feed and chores to finish, there's suddenly a lot less daylight to get everything done.

It's also the time of year when we begin thinking about Thanksgiving, gathering with family and friends, and taking stock of the things we're thankful for. It's easy to get caught up in our busy schedules and overlook some of the things that mean the most to us. Sometimes it takes a holiday, or even just a change in seasons, to remind us to appreciate them.

That idea came to mind while visiting with Brett and Keylie Tatum for this month's cover story. The couple owns Tres Rios Silver, a custom buckle company based near Decatur. Both come from families with extensive histories in rodeo and ranching, and their business has its own family history that stretches back decades.

One of my favorite parts of our conversation was hearing about the buckles that mean the most to people. Brett and Keylie have made awards for major rodeos and well-known entertainers, but they place just as much importance on a single buckle made to honor someone's memory or recognize a personal accomplishment. Their son, Pecos, has won some impressive awards during his rodeo career, yet the buckle he chooses to wear is one he received in memory of his cousin.

I think there's something worth remembering in that story. The things we value most aren't always the biggest accomplishments or the most expensive possessions. Often, they're the things that remind us of people, experiences and memories that have shaped our lives.

As we head into Thanksgiving, I hope everyone has an opportunity to spend some time with the people who matter most. Whether you're gathering around a big table with family, traveling for the holiday, or staying home to take care of the ranch, I hope November gives you plenty of reasons to be thankful.

And as for that extra hour we're getting when the clocks change, I hope you get to enjoy it. I have a feeling most of us will find something to do with it!

Happy Thanksgiving!

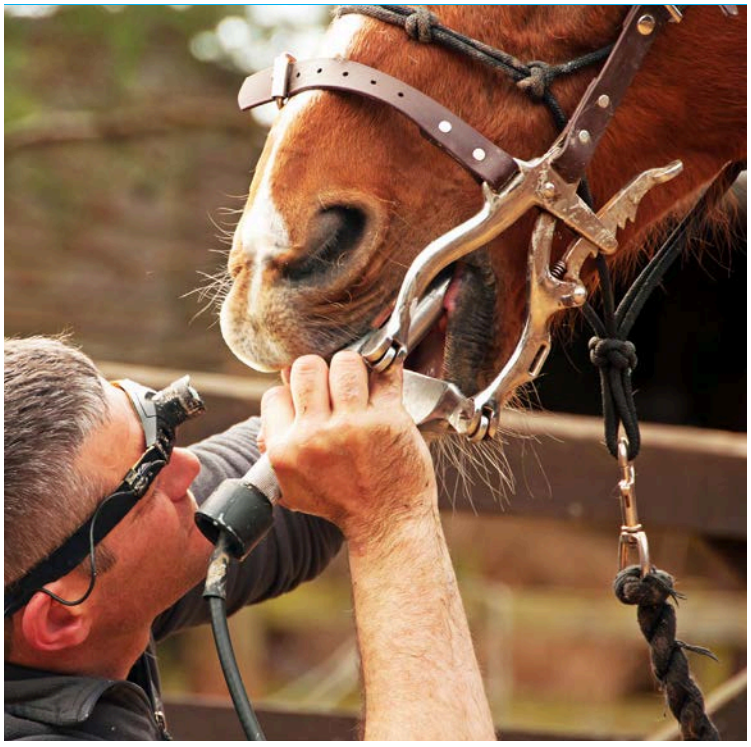
Savannah Magoteaux

Savannah Magoteaux, Editor
editor@ntfronline.com

CONTENTS



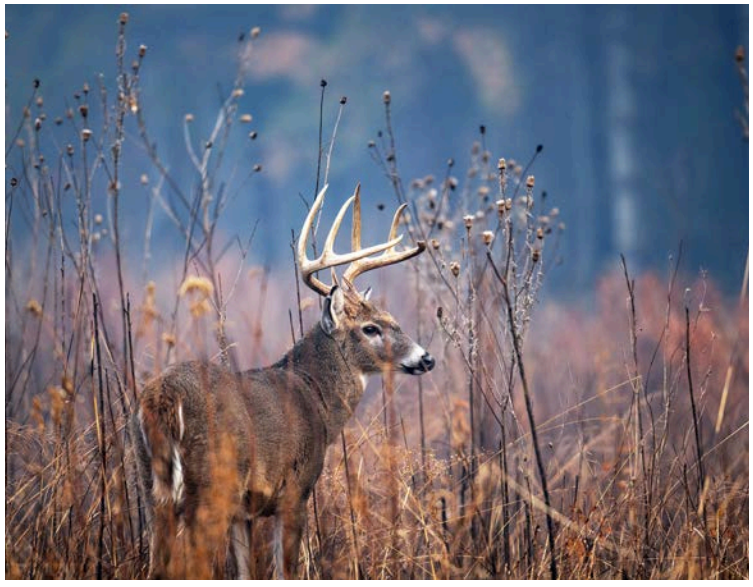
pg. **26** Made to be Worn - Tres Rios Silver



pg. **22** A Horse's Teeth Never Stop Changing



pg. **16** Grazing North Texas - Meadow Dropseed



pg. **49** How Old is that Buck?

10
Noble Learning
Maddy Westbrook discusses effective rainfall.

12
Herd Health
Have you ever truly considered if cows are cold in the winter?

18
Fiscal Farming
Have you thought of the hidden cost of hay waste?

44
Dirt Road Dietitian
Sheri Glazier shares a recipe for crispy beef and veggies.

52
The Garden Guy
Norman Winter says lacebark elm is stunning in winter.

Baylor County



450 +/- acres east of Seymour.
3 stock tanks, 324 ac. cultivation.
$4,000/ acre. Call Chris.

Seymour, TX



5,000 sq. ft. building with office and showroom on 1.38+/- acres.
Call Chris for more details.

Baylor County



148 +/- acres, mixture of native grass and cultivated farmland, good hunting located 5 miles east of Seymour.
Call Meri Beth.

Haskell County



540 acs of prime irrigated farmland with the capacity to support up to 10 water wells.
Price Reduced to $2,500 per ac

Haskell Co: 540 +/- acs irrigated cropland with 10 wells. $2,500/ac. Call Kimbra

Baylor Co: 10+ acs at corner of US 277 and FM 422. $125,000. Call Scott

Baylor Co: 121 +/- acs. w[illegible] CONTRACT PENDING! $125,000. Call Scott

Lake Stamford: 3 lots near the lake. Ready for new home. $15,000 per lot. Call Chris


Chris Jakubicek
940-631-4825


Kimbra Hajek
940-636-2174


Scott Mizell
281-704-8924


Scotty Crowley
940-733-2146


Meri Beth
940-631-9746

Lone Star Realty

www.LoneStar-Realty.com



Fischer's

Since 1927

GERMAN SAUSAGE, HAM, BACON, GROCERIES

TURN NORTH AT RED LIGHT

304 N. MAIN, MUENSTER, TEXAS



10* SPECIAL OFFER OFF YOUR FIRST $100 PURCHASE

Visit www.ntfronline.com to print out coupon by clicking on ad

940-759-4211

WWW.FISCHERSMEATMARKET.COM

MONDAY-SATURDAY 6 AM - 7 PM • WHOLESALE/RETAIL



Purina Cattle Developer 12 Textured Supplement - the ultimate choice for nurturing your beef cattle to their full potential.





EquiTub with ClariFly

A Self-Fed Horse Supplement for Consistent Nutrition and Seasonal Fly Control

QUALITY PRODUCTS, SERVICE & PEOPLE EST. 1939

BEREND BROS.

Bowie
Windthorst
Wichita Falls
Olney

www.Berendbros.com

MoorMan's® ShowTec®

Show Feeds NOW IN STOCK!

Annual Bull and Female Sale

REVERSE ROCKING R RANCH

1:00 PM MST

DECEMBER 5 2026

AT THE RANCH

MAXWELL NEW MEXICO

✓ FREE NATIONWIDE DELIVERY

✓ 100% SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

DVAuction
Broadcasting Real-Time Auctions

Selling

150 ANGUS BULLS & 60 ANGUS FEMALES
PLUS SPECIALTY GENETIC LOTS



Sires include Mason Landmark, Baldridge Headstart, Spring Cove Grant, Poss Ultra, Pine View Red State, MG Magnitude, RR Rito Hustler, Crouch Congress, Connealy Commerce 12T and more

75% OF OFFERING IS GENERATED IN OUR ET PROGRAM!

WHERE THE *Grasslands* MEET THE *Rockies*



RRR CONGRESS R0355 #21268450



RRR GMC ULTRA R8255 #21294083

Let us help with the trip! Offering a $250 credit when you attend the sale in person!

BULLS SELLING

NAME	DOB	REG	PAP	SIRE	CED	BW	WW	YW	YH	PAP	HP	MILK	CW	MARB	RE	$M	$B	$C
RRR LAF Showdown R9255	10/30/25	21594111	N/A	Galaxy Showdown L401	5	3.1	99	172	1.1	1.73	11.3	26	109	1.47	1.42	111	275	468
RRR GMC Prohibition R2425	11/20/25	21502312	N/A	Linz Prohibition 2004	17	-1.2	84	149	0.6	2.81	9.9	27	106	1.81	1.39	73	298	460
RRR GMC Headstart L296	03/08/25	21343120	N/A	Baldridge Headstart	7	1.8	84	145	0.5	3.36	11.4	34	83	1.80	1.13	107	268	455
RRR GMC Breakthrough R0085	02/20/25	21268498	34	Beal Breakthrough	14	0.0	92	164	0.9	0.56	8.2	39	104	1.48	1.69	78	272	431
RRR Congress R0355	02/27/25	21268450	33	Crouch Congress	8	0.6	79	142	0.3	-1.50	11.4	32	86	1.53	1.14	81	258	416
RRR GMC Yours Truly R8175	01/29/25	21294079	40	Rhoades Yours Truly 2013	12	-0.2	90	157	0.6	1.76	12.8	24	87	1.58	1.01	90	248	412
RRR GMC Landmark R1425	06/21/25	21383716	39	Mason Landmark 2313	9	1.7	86	148	0.3	2.86	8.7	35	84	1.73	0.83	78	244	394
RRR Headstart R0315	02/26/25	21268356	40	Baldridge Headstart	12	0.9	73	129	0.5	1.70	11.2	36	77	1.35	0.88	93	229	390
RRR Grant R0265	02/25/25	21300588	36	Spring Cove Grant 200K	10	0.5	89	155	0.5	-0.72	9.7	23	81	1.38	0.89	101	222	389
RRR GMC R8235	03/08/25	21276511	41	Poss Ultra	13	0.0	97	159	0.4	1.99	14.1	32	86	1.14	0.87	121	203	384

REVERSEROCKINGRRANCH.COM
358 Laguna Madre Rd / Maxwell, NM 87728

Chris & Krista Earl, Owner
630-675-6559 or svfchief@aol.com

Trent & Emily Earl, Manager 719-557-9915
Garrett Earl, Herdsman 630-400-1225
Jeff Earl, Promotion & South Ranch

FOCUSED ON MUSCLE, CAPACITY, FERTILITY, CALVING EASE AND END-PRODUCT MERIT • RAISED IN BIG TOUGH COUNTRY AT ELEVATION

A goose for Thanksgiving

By Bryce Angell

When planning for Thanksgiving, turkey always comes to mind. A turkey roasted to perfection is what we'd always dined.

But then last fall a friend of mine said, "Try a goose this year." His name was Tuck and when he talked it wasn't very clear.

So, I loaded up my twelve-gauge and I hopped into my truck. Tuck and Hap jumped right on in. Now we hoped to have some luck.

We stopped by Merkle's Store to get a Twinkie for our lunch. I thought we'd be out there awhile. Not sure, but just a hunch.

I introduced my company. "Meet Tuck and Hap today. Hap is my four-legged friend and Tuck, it's hard to say."

I asked old Mr. Merkle. "Hoping for a gander goose. Ya don't know of a stray one or a tame one on the loose?"

Old Merkle said, "I've got a twenty pounder in the store. It's yours for fifteen dollars, not a single penny more."

I looked at Tuck. He shook his head. Said, "What a quandary." I said, "We're gonna buy the bird. That's easier for me."

At home I told my wife 'bout how we shot the wild bird. And how the plucking took so long. The story was absurd.



A Canada goose provides a fitting illustration for Bryce Angell's Thanksgiving tale. (Courtesy photo)

Thanksgiving Day came soon enough. Our goose was golden brown. Tuck mumbled words I hoped were grace. Then we gobbled goose meat down.

"It's sure a funny thing about this goose we ate today." Those words were spoken by my wife. She had some more to say.

"Inside I found the packaged gravy, heart and gizzard too. And instructions how to cook the goose. Looks like your game is through."

I looked at Tuck. He stared straight down. My neck was in a noose. Old Hap barked twice. I'm sure he thought, "You're dumber than the goose."

JOIN IN THE CONVERSATION ONLINE!
NTFRonline.com
Feel free to drop us a line at editor@ntfronline.com or share your comments on our social media pages. You might even see your name in the next issue!

Noble Learning:

How management influences effective rainfall

By Maddy Westbrook

When pastures begin to dry out, it's natural to focus on rainfall totals. Producers often watch weather forecasts, hoping the next storm will bring enough moisture to carry forage through the season.

But according to Noble Research Institute regenerative ranching advisor Jim Johnson, rainfall totals tell only part of the story.

"People always think it doesn't rain enough," Johnson says. "It doesn't matter how much it rains. What matters is how much of it you keep."

That's where the concept of effective rainfall comes in. Effective rainfall refers to the portion of precipitation that infiltrates the soil and remains available for plant growth. Some rainfall runs off the land before it can soak in. Some evaporates from the soil surface before plants can use it.

The amount that stays behind to support forage production is what really matters.

Two ranches can receive the same rainfall and experience very different results. The difference often comes down to soil health and management.

"One producer could be doing really good regenerative management and getting all of that rainfall to soak in and capture in the soil," Johnson says. "The other could be overstocked, grazing too hard, not leaving enough residual, cutting too much hay, and so there will be less water soak in his soil and more will run off."



Ranches can't control rainfall, but healthy soils can help them capture, store and use more of the moisture they receive. (Courtesy photo)

Improving effective rainfall starts with understanding what happens when water hits the ground.

Why cover matters

One of the most important factors influencing effective rainfall is soil cover. Johnson points to litter — the layer of plant residue, trampled forage and manure that accumulates on the soil surface — as a critical component of a healthy water cycle.

"Those raindrops are coming down like little bombs," he says. "And if the surface is bare, they're going to compact the soil surface. So if it's covered with litter, that's going to protect the soil surface from being compacted just by the force of the raindrop."

Litter acts as a protective layer that absorbs the impact of rainfall before it reaches the soil.

It also slows water movement across the landscape. On sloping ground, rainfall that might otherwise run downhill is held in place longer, giving it more time to infiltrate. Just as importantly, litter helps conserve moisture after rainfall occurs.

"It is a blanket over the soil to prevent evaporation," Johnson says. "It helps hold the moisture in the soil once it's there so it doesn't all evaporate away."

Bare ground has the opposite effect. Without protection from litter or living plants, soil heats up quickly and loses moisture faster.

"The more bare ground you have, the more runoff you will have from your rainfall," Johnson says.

The role of living roots

While litter protects the soil surface, living roots improve what happens beneath it. Roots create channels throughout the soil profile that allow water to move deeper into the ground. As roots die and decompose, they leave behind pore space that continue to serve as pathways for water infiltration.

"Roots are making channels into the soil," Johnson says. "They make a lot of pore spaces to hold water and allow water to soak in."

The process becomes even more powerful when soil biology gets involved. Earthworms often move into old root channels, creating tunnels that future roots can follow. Over time, this cycle

builds a network of pathways that improves both water movement and water storage.

Roots also help form soil aggregates, groups of soil particles bound together by biological activity. The spaces between these aggregates store water that plants can later access.

"It's like a sponge," Johnson says. "The roots in the soil together just make a sponge."

Management drives the water cycle

Healthy soils don't happen by accident. Management decisions directly influence how much rainfall stays on the ranch. Johnson points to overgrazing as one of the most common challenges.

Even when stocking rates are appropriate, inadequate recovery between grazing events can limit a pasture's ability to capture and retain rainfall.

"Your cover is always going to be short," Johnson says. "And if your plants are always short, you're going to have less infiltration than somebody else who has taller plants with more recovery."

Haying can create similar challenges. After forage is cut, the soil surface is exposed to direct sunlight and higher temperatures. With less cover protecting the ground, soils can become hard and dry.

Producers looking to improve effective rainfall can focus on several practical strategies:

- Maintain soil cover throughout the year.
- Reduce bare ground.
- Allow adequate recovery between grazing events.
- Match stocking rates to carrying capacity.
- Minimize unnecessary soil disturbance.
- Increase plant diversity.
- Maintain living roots for as much of the year as possible.

These practices align closely with the soil health principles taught through Noble's educational programs.

Building water-holding capacity

Beyond improving infiltration, long-term management can also increase the amount of water that soil is capable of storing. One of the biggest drivers is soil organic matter.

"You can't do a whole lot about whether you have a sandy soil or a clay soil," Johnson says. "But organic matter can go a long, long way to improve your soil-water relationship."

Organic matter improves both infiltration and water-holding capacity. As soil health improves, roots and biological activity can extend deeper into the soil profile, creating additional space for water storage.

Johnson often shares a commonly cited benchmark that a 1% increase in soil organic matter can translate to roughly one additional inch of effective rainfall over the course of a year. That extra moisture may not arrive all at once, but the cumulative effect across multiple rainfall events can be significant.

"There's probably always something we can do to make it a little better," Johnson says.

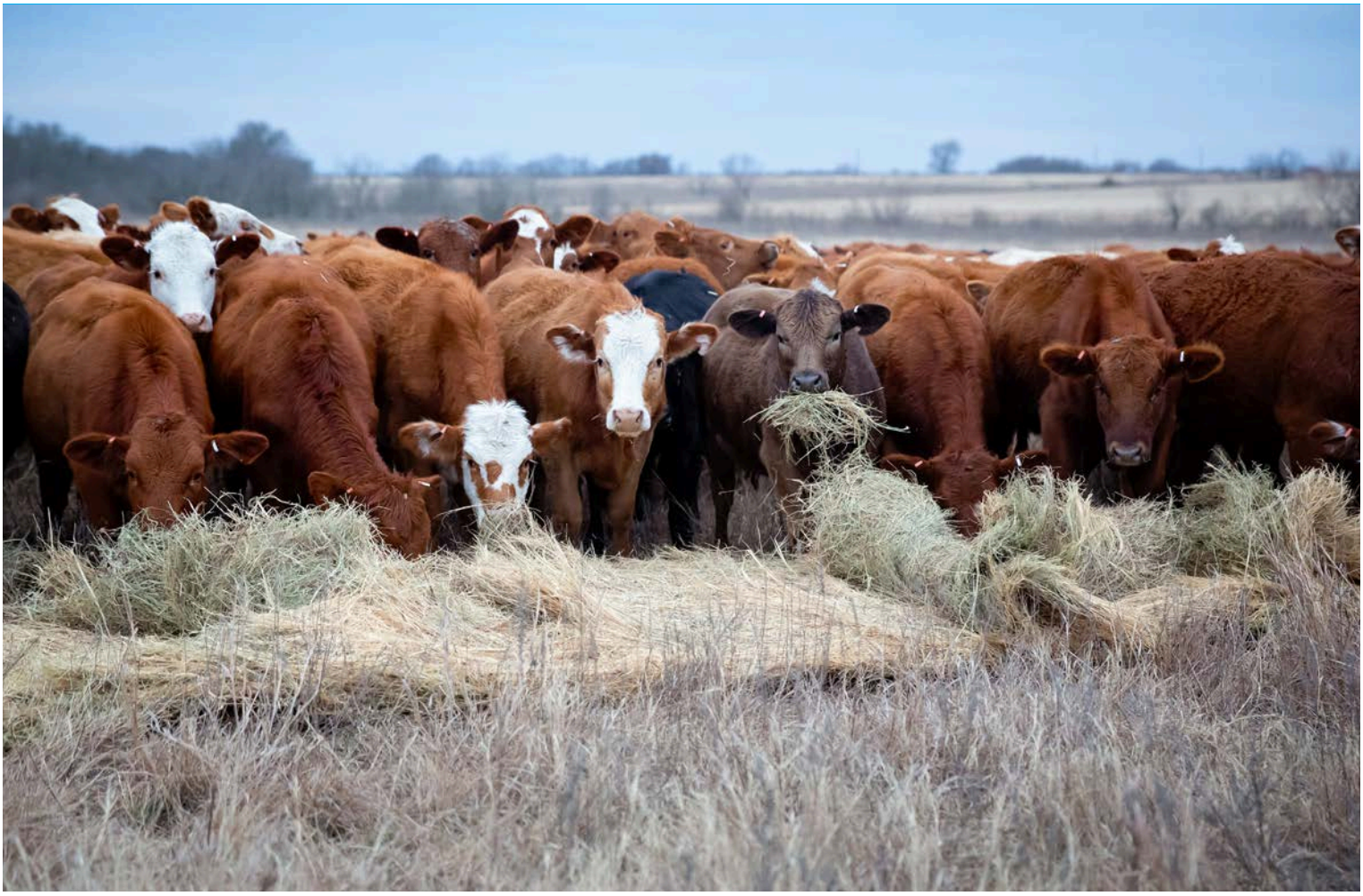
For producers facing dry conditions, that perspective offers an important reminder. While no one can control when or how much rain falls, management can influence how much of that rainfall remains available to support forage production.

"The important thing about managing your rainfall is getting it in the soil and keeping it in the soil," Johnson says. In many cases, the most valuable water on a ranch isn't the next rainfall event. It's the rainfall that's already arrived and stayed.



Do cows get cold?

By NTFR Staff



Cattle gather around hay during cold weather. Adequate forage and protection from wind and moisture help them maintain body temperature. (Courtesy photos)

A cow wearing a heavy winter hair coat can stand in weather that makes a person hurry back to the pickup. That does not mean cattle are immune to cold. They simply have a different comfort range, and the point where cold becomes stressful depends on body condition, hair coat, wind, moisture, age and nutrition.

Animal scientists use the term lower critical temperature for the point below which an animal must spend additional energy to maintain normal body temperature. That threshold is not one fixed number for every cow. Oklahoma State University has noted that a mature cow in good body condition with a thick, dry winter coat may have a lower critical temperature near 32 degrees Fahrenheit. A thin cow with a thinner coat may begin experiencing cold stress around 40 degrees. A wet hair coat changes the equation dramatically, with a lower critical temperature that can rise to roughly 59 degrees.

That last number explains why a cold rain can be harder on cattle than dry air at a lower temperature. A dry winter coat traps air and provides insulation. When it becomes soaked, much of that insulating value disappears. Add wind, and heat loss increases further.

Cold stress does not simply make a cow uncomfortable. Her maintenance energy requirement rises as she works to keep warm. Oklahoma State specialists use a general rule that energy needs can increase about 1 percent for each degree below the cow's lower critical temperature. During severe cold, that can amount to a sizable increase.

The practical response is not to dump a large amount of unfamiliar grain into a bunk on the morning a blue norther arrives. Sudden ration changes can create digestive problems. Producers are better served by entering winter with cows in appropriate body condition, providing adequate forage and making modest nutritional adjustments before and during extreme weather.

Forage is especially useful because fermentation in the rumen produces heat. Good-quality hay also keeps cattle eating when dormant pasture alone cannot meet nutrient needs. Protein supplementation may

be necessary when low-quality forage limits rumen microbial activity and intake.

Shelter matters most when cattle are wet and exposed to wind. A tree line, brush, terrain, windbreak or shed can reduce wind exposure. Bedding or a dry place to lie down can be important during prolonged cold and wet periods. Calves, thin cattle, sick animals and cows that have not acclimated to winter weather deserve the closest attention.

Water can become the forgotten part of cold-weather care. Ice, frozen valves and difficult access reduce intake at the same time cattle are being asked to consume dry hay. Checking water systems is just as important in January as it is in July.

Watch cattle rather than relying only on the forecast. Persistent shivering, huddling, reluctance to leave shelter, reduced intake or cattle that are obviously losing condition are warnings that the environment is outrunning the nutrition and protection available.



A winter hair coat helps cattle tolerate cold, although wet conditions and strong winds increase their energy needs.

So, do cows get cold? Absolutely. A healthy, acclimated cow with a dry winter coat can tolerate a great deal, but she still has limits. The thermometer is only the beginning of the answer.

Body condition is a form of insurance. Fat reserves provide insulation and stored energy, while thin cows have less margin when weather turns severe. That is why trying to put condition on cows before winter is usually easier than attempting to repair a large deficit during repeated cold fronts.

Hair coat condition is just as visible. Mud, rain and freezing precipitation flatten the coat and reduce trapped air. A cow standing dry in 25-degree weather can be in a very different physiological situation from a wet cow at 40. That is one reason ranchers should look at precipitation and wind forecasts along with the temperature.

Calving changes priorities quickly. A mature dry cow has different nutrient demands from a lactating cow, and a newborn calf has far less cold tolerance. Bedding, shelter and rapid attention to weak calves can matter more than almost any adult-cow management practice during a severe storm.



Turner Country Properties

FARM • RANCH • LAND

TurnerCountryProperties.com

Stephen Turner, Listing Agent
940-636-7039
Stephen@turnercountryproperties.com

ARCHER COUNTY



154 PRAIRIE WAY — $575,000

Located in desirable Decker Farms within sought-after Holliday ISD, this beautifully maintained home offers 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, an open-concept floor plan, walk-in closets, an office, and a mudroom. Upstairs features a bedroom, full bath, and media/game room. Freshly painted throughout, including the garage, this move-in ready home combines style, comfort, and space—ready to welcome its new owners.

WICHITA COUNTY



600 S. COLORADO STREET — $315,000

Versatile 13,000± SF industrial property on a 2.75-acre encompassing a full city in Iowa Park, frontage on FM 368 and W. Pecan. Features three insulated metal shop buildings with 220V service, multiple overhead/roll-up doors, overhead crane with 1- and 6-ton hoists, central air compressor system, and attached office space. Ideal for fabrication, service, storage, or light industrial use. Contract Jone Moss, Listing Agent, 940-867-6743.

139.07 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY



EDSEL FARM — $4,950/Ac

The Edsel Farm is located less than a half mile north of US HWY 287. Excellent access with frontage on Huntington and Kiel. The land consists of 139.07 acres, 53 acres is tillable farmland, balance being moderate to heavily wooded native pasture. There are partial cross fences, boundary is fenced in average condition. Surface water consists of two stock ponds, seasonal and partial floodplain. Electricity and water available Huntington and Kiel.

78.88 ACRES | CLAY COUNTY



OLD MAN PLACE — $4,200/Ac

Located just north of Dean on FM 2393, 15 minutes east of Wichita Falls in Clay County. The land is completely wooded with mesquites offering great cover for wildlife. The topography is level to slightly sloping. There is one stock pond near the road frontage with ample room for construction of new stock ponds if desired. Electricity and Dean Dale Water are available along FM2393. This would make a great hunting property, or build your dream home.

40 ACRES | WICHITA COUNTY



LEHMAN FARM — $6,975/Ac

Great property for a new home site or hobby farm located a short drive north of Iowa Park in Iowa Park ISD. Wichita Valley water meter installed and electricity available. No known Deed Restrictions. Primarily in cultivation at this time and fences are in good condition. There are 3 active oil wells at this time but are primarily located on the western 1/3 of property and accessed from the northwest corner of property. Seller doesn't own any minerals. Contract Jone Moss, Listing Agent – 940-867-6743.

Turner Country Properties Available Listings

Muir Meadows – 72 Acres – Wichita Co - $6,500/Acre
Holbrook Farm – 303 Acres – Wichita Co - $1,300/Acre
Fugate River Ranch – 278 Acres – Wichita Co - $4,676/Acre
Decker Farm - $5.02 Acres – Archer Co - $14,940/Acre
Maag – 19.45 Acres – Archer Co - $8,483/Acre
Maag – 19.32 Acres – Archer Co - $8,540/Acre
Maag – 17.33 Acres – Archer Co - $8,482/Acre

More Details Available at
TurnerCountryProperties.com

Land Market Report

By Jared Groce

Overwhelming peace and joy fill my heart as I write this due to the cooler temperatures and badly needed rain that is falling today! It has been a very long, hot, and dry summer for us here in North Texas, and the change of season is very welcomed. I wish that we also would have a change of seasons in the rural real estate market, but that is not in the works quite yet. But $6.00+ a gallon diesel, sky high insurance bills, and an increase in the price of virtually everything we use has buyers on the sidelines still, boosted by the political turmoil that we are bombarded with all day every day.

Historically, election years have proved to make the real estate market unsettled in the months preceding the election, but over the past few cycles we have noticed that even mi-term elections have had the same effect. Perhaps things might calm down a little after the November election this year, but only time will tell. One thing is for sure though - this too shall pass.

Lately, I have been telling clients that this is not a good time to sell, but if you MUST sell now, you need to make sure your property is in pristine condition before putting it on the market. Clean up, fix fences and sagging gates, landscape the house, power wash the cobwebs and dirt dobber nests down, trim trees, etc. There are a very limited number of buyers and a whole lot for them to choose from, so make sure that your property stands out in a positive way to them. Getting buyers onto the property is hard enough - don't run them off once they get there by having a lot of trash and debris laying around and items in poor condition.

If you are a buyer, you're in luck right now. You have plenty to choose from and sellers are making more concessions in pricing in order to get the property sold. Some borrowers are worried about interest rates, but that is a false fear. Interest rates are in the healthy range right now, we just got spoiled with the super low rates we experienced over the last decade. Plus, it is cheaper to buy today and refinance later if rates come down than it is to buy later on when prices WILL be higher.

I have seen a drastic increase lately in "investors" trying to make offers on listings with some really strange terms. With some investigation, I have found that these are generally investment businesses that are trying to tie up land that is for sale, and then sell the contract to data centers for a huge profit margin. These investors are asking for crazy things like 90-180 days "due diligence" periods and putting zero money down. Others are looking to put properties in contract as a joint venture with the seller, again with no money down, and promising huge returns to the seller down the road. Be very careful when your agent brings you on offer with these terms! I have one listing where I have received three offers like this just over the summer alone.

Another major fraud going around is seller impersonation, where a scammer finds your property info on the county appraisal district website and tries to get an agent to sell the land. It is always raw land where the owner lives nowhere near the property, and typically is a smaller tract of land. These scammers will only communicate via text or email, and will want to sell it very quickly. They only will accept a cash offer so that a lender won't catch on to what is happening. They only want to use "their" title company (which is not a real title company at all) and a fake notary. Once the transaction is completed and funded, the wired money goes to their off shore bank and the new buyer is screwed.

I suspect that there will be more and more new scams in the future, so it is important to be VERY careful on transactions, and keep an eye on property that you own, especially if you do not live near it.

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today. Same is true for buying land.

COUNTY	AREA	ACRES	$ ACRE	LIST $	SOLD $	SALE / LIST	DOM	
CLAY	HENRIETTA	48	$7,292	$350,000	$350,000	100.00%		112
CLAY	BELLEVUE	200	$4,500	########	$900,000	76.30%		192
	AVG	124	$5,896	$765,000	$625,000	88.10%		152
COLLIN	FARMERSVILLE	13.42	$37,098	$498,000	$498,000	100.00%		2
	AVG	13.42	$37,098	$498,000	$498,000	100.00%		2
COOKE	LINDSAY	11	$20,000	$247,500	220000	88.90%		226
COOKE	VALLEY VIEW	59.45	$18,503	########	########	78.90%		346
COOKE	GAINESVILLE	127.03	$11,808	########	########	100.00%		7
	AVG	65.83	$16,770	########	$940,000	89.20%		193
DENTON	AUBREY	18.73	$105,000	########	########	89.40%		51
	AVG	18.73	$105,000	########	########	89.40%		51
GRAYSON	BELLS	11.37	$20,888	$260,000	$237,500	91.30%		285
GRAYSON	BELLS	12	$19,792	$250,000	$237,500	95.00%		285
GRAYSON	WHITEWRIGHT	11	$31,818	$349,000	$350,000	100.30%		13
GRAYSON	WHITESBORO	10.5	$40,000	$490,000	$420,000	85.70%		113
GRAYSON	COLLINSVILLE	10.5	$46,190	$519,750	$485,000	93.30%		121
GRAYSON	WHITESBORO	50.61	$22,724	########	########	85.20%		230
GRAYSON	COLLINSVILLE	62.8	$24,682	########	########	88.10%		187
	AVG	24.11	$29,442	$711,021	$632,867	92.30%		176
JACK	PERRIN	15	$14,000	$215,000	$210,000	97.70%		507
JACK	JACKSBORO	20.92	$10,250	$214,432	$214,432	100.00%		93
JACK	JACKSBORO	13.81	$41,274	$575,000	$570,000	99.10%		11
	AVG	16.58	$21,841	$334,811	$331,477	98.90%		204
MONTAGUE	MONTAGUE	26.61	12102	332600	322000	96.80%		484
MONTAGUE	NOCONA	148.25	7757	1355000	1150000	86.10%		81
	AVG	87.43	$9,929	$833,800	$736,000	91.50%		283
WISE	SUNSET	12	$17,500	$234,000	$210,000	89.70%		11
WISE	BOYD	10.01	$39,960	$400,000	$400,000	100.00%		25
	AVG	11.01	$28,730	$317,000	$305,000	94.90%		18

Grazing North Texas

By Tony Dean, tonydean.tx1@gmail.com

Meadow Dropseed

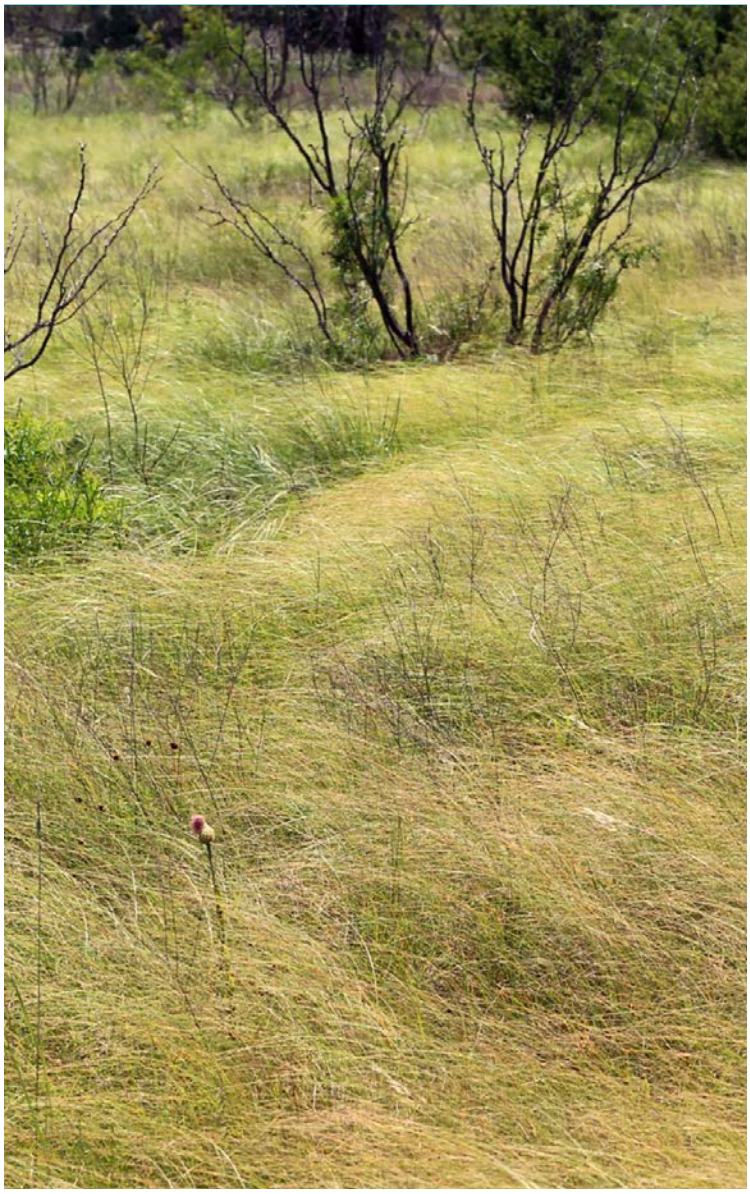


Meadow dropseed develops an ornamental appearance when mature.(Photo courtesy of Tony Dean.

Meadow dropseed is a native perennial bunch grass that matures into large dense plants that can reach one to two feet in diameter. The leaves are flat and narrow and can grow up to 24" long. These long slender leaves fold inward as they grow, giving the plants a flowing appearance when mature.

The seedhead is a very narrow panicle from three to eight inches long and is often enclosed in the sheath.

Having almost an ornamental appearance, Meadow dropseed



Meadow dropseed leaves are tough and wiry making the grass difficult for cattle to consume.

is interesting to observe. But it is not very high on the list of desirable grazing plants. It provides poor to fair grazing for all classes of livestock and for deer.

One can readily see why Meadow dropseed is not a preferred grazing species by simply grabbing a small handful of the mature leaves. Give the leaves a tug with your hands and you will find they are almost impossible to break. This is what a cow feels as she wraps her tongue around a plant. It is just not worth the effort. Meadow dropseed does produce a small amount of grazing in early spring when new leaves first appear.

Meadow dropseed can be found growing as individual plants or as colonies of monoculture. Pastures that are always grazed in summer months may show an increase in this grass because cattle will select other plants in the pasture and allow Meadow dropseed to grow.

One benefit of this plant is that it has a deep root system and will reduce erosion where it is grown.

Quail occasionally use seed from Meadow dropseed for food and it provides nesting cover for birds.





Hidden cost of hay waste

By Savannah Magoteaux

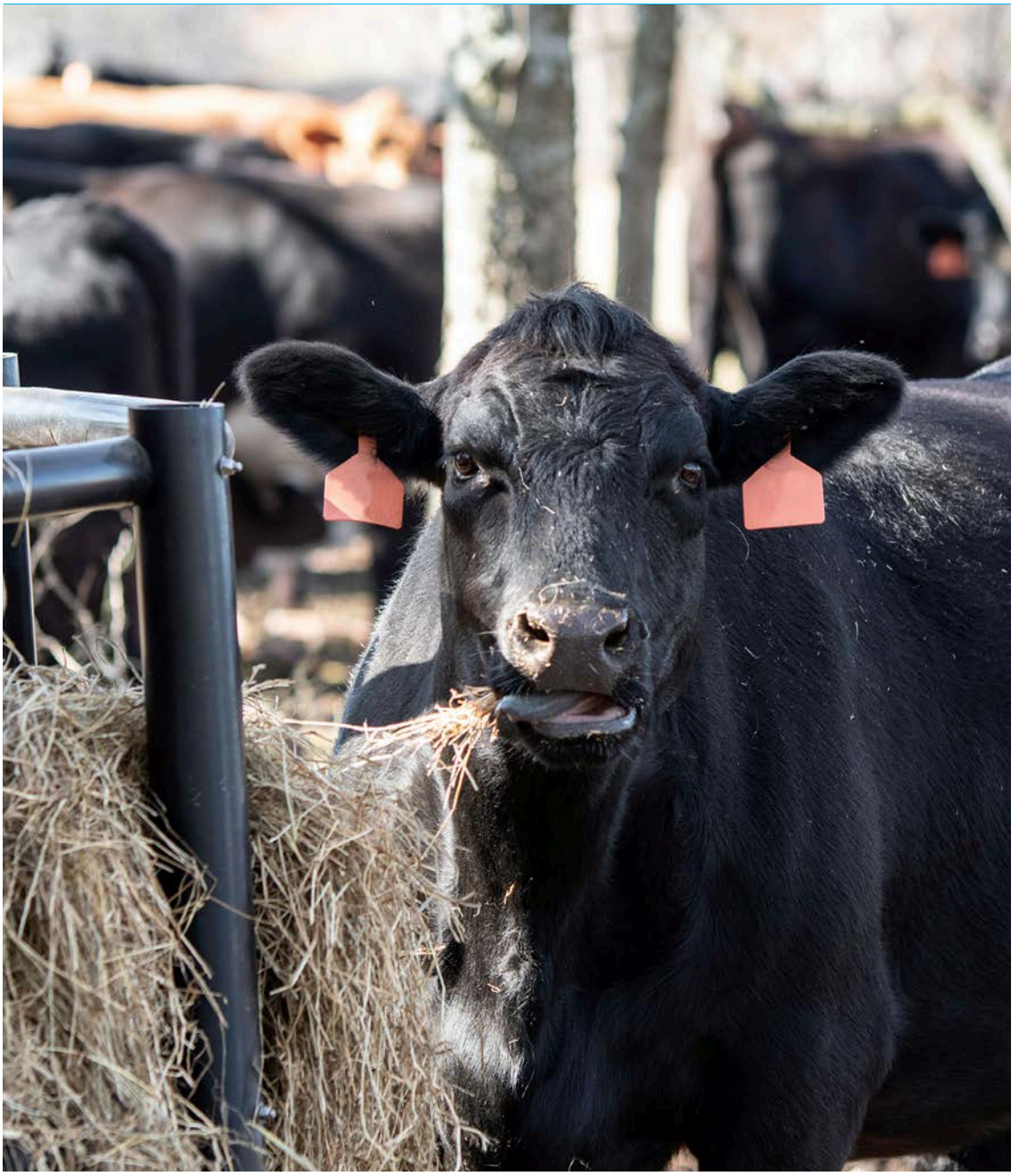
When hay is expensive, every bale looks valuable. The waste around the feeder often does not. Cattle pull hay out, trample it, bed in it, foul it or leave a wet mat that will never become feed. Those losses can quietly turn a reasonably priced bale into an expensive one.

Hay waste varies enormously with feeding method, feeder design, weather, forage quality and how much hay is offered at once. University of Nebraska-Lincoln specialists note that some feeding methods have produced losses greater than 25 percent, with some studies reporting waste approaching 39 percent. Well-designed ring or basket feeders with sheeted bottoms can reduce losses dramatically, sometimes into the 5 to 10 percent range.

Put those percentages into bales. If 20 percent of a 1,300-pound round bale is wasted, 260 pounds never nourish a cow. Across 100 bales, that is the equivalent of 20 whole bales lost. At $80 a bale, the visible price tag is $1,600, before considering the hauling, storage and labor invested in hay that ends up underfoot.

Feeder design matters because cattle are remarkably good at pulling hay out of a feeder while searching for the bites they prefer. Once hay hits muddy ground and is stepped on, cattle are less likely to eat it. Feeders that restrict how far cattle can reach and include a solid lower section can keep more hay inside. No design eliminates waste, but the difference between a good feeder and feeding an unrestricted bale can be substantial.

Unrolling hay is not automatically wasteful. It can distribute manure and nutrients across a pasture and give more cattle room to eat at once. The problem comes when more is unrolled than cattle will clean up promptly. If the goal is one day's feed, putting out several days at once invites trampling and weather loss. The same principle applies to processed hay placed in windrows.



Hay pulled from a feeder or scattered on the ground becomes an expense even when it was already purchased or raised. (Courtesy photos)

Storage losses happen before a bale reaches the feeder. Round bales stored outside absorb moisture where they contact soil and where rain penetrates the outer layers. The percentage lost depends on bale density, storage surface, climate and length of storage. Raising bales off wet soil, orienting rows so water drains away and covering hay can preserve feed that otherwise disappears before winter is over.

Quality affects waste, too.

Cattle sort low-quality hay more aggressively. Stemmy, weathered forage may look plentiful in the ring while cattle selectively consume leaves and leave the rest. A forage test can help determine whether the hay will meet nutritional needs, but physical quality still affects how eagerly cattle eat it.

Mud compounds nearly every problem. Feed dropped into mud is lost, and cattle standing around a feeder can churn a winter feeding area into a nutrient-rich mess. Moving feeders, using a hardened feeding surface or intentionally choosing a sacrifice area can reduce pasture damage and make cleanup easier.

The easiest way to measure waste is not to chase a perfect percentage. Watch what is left after cattle have had reasonable time to eat. If a thick ring of hay builds around every feeder, change something. Feed less at once. Try a different feeder. Improve the feeding surface. Move the ring. Compare how long a bale lasts before and after the change.



Feeder design, placement and management can influence how much hay winds up on the ground.

Hay conservation is often discussed as a forage-production problem, but some of the cheapest hay a ranch can find is the hay it already bought and stops wasting.

The math becomes even more important when hay quality is high. If a ranch bought tested hay because it provides enough protein and energy to reduce supplement costs, wasting a fifth of that bale is also wasting the nutrients that justified the purchase. The replacement feed may cost more than the simple dollars-per-bale

Continue on page 20





Continued from page 19
calculation suggests.

Feeding frequency is another lever. When cattle have unrestricted access to a round bale, they can sort, pull and bed in hay for days. Limit-fed systems require more labor and bunk space, but they can give a producer tighter control over intake and waste. Neither system is automatically best. Labor, cow numbers, equipment and pasture layout matter.

The feeder itself should also match the cattle. Horned cattle, calves and large mature cows may use openings differently. A feeder that reduces waste but creates crowding or prevents timid cattle from eating is not solving the whole problem. Observe cattle at feeding time, not only the hay left afterward.

One useful winter exercise is to weigh or estimate how much hay is being delivered to a group for a week and compare it with realistic expected intake. The gap includes waste, weather loss and estimation error. Even a rough audit can reveal whether the operation is losing a few percent or feeding far more hay than cow requirements can explain.

Storage losses deserve the same scrutiny as feeding losses. Hay stored directly on the ground can wick moisture into the bottom bales, while uncovered hay exposed to repeated rain loses both dry matter and feeding value.

A row of weathered round bales may look serviceable from the road, but the dark outer layer represents forage that was grown, cut, baled and hauled without ever becoming useful feed. Elevating bales and protecting them from precipitation can improve how much of each bale ultimately reaches cattle.

The best system is not necessarily the one with the least visible waste. Labor, equipment, pasture conditions and herd size all matter. Unrolling hay can distribute manure and nutrients across a pasture, for example, but cattle may trample more forage if too much is put out at once. Rings reduce trampling, but design matters.



Poor storage can reduce the amount of usable forage from every bale, adding to winter feeding costs.

Research consistently shows that feeders that restrict access and help contain hay generally reduce losses compared with feeding an unrestricted bale on the ground.

A useful way to think about waste is to price the hay cattle actually consume, not the hay that arrives on the ranch. If one feeding method loses twice as much forage as another, the cheaper piece of equipment may not be cheaper for long.

Is that cow too old?

By NTFR Staff

A cow does not become unproductive because she turns 10. She becomes unproductive when she can no longer do the job the ranch needs her to do. In older cows, the mouth is one of the best places to look for the reason.

Cattle use their lower incisors to grasp forage against a hard dental pad on the upper jaw. The front teeth can provide a rough indication of age when cattle are young because permanent incisors erupt in a fairly predictable sequence. As cows get older, however, exact aging from wear becomes less reliable. What matters more in a mature cow is whether the teeth are still functional.

Producers often use the term broken-mouth for cows with missing, badly worn or damaged incisors. A smooth-mouth cow has worn the incisors down substantially. Those descriptions are not simply cosmetic. A cow that cannot efficiently bite short dormant grass may struggle even when there appears to be forage in the pasture.



A cow's productivity depends on body condition, teeth, soundness and her ability to raise a calf, rather than age alone. (Courtesy photo)

The back teeth matter too, although they are harder to inspect. Molars and premolars grind forage after it is gathered. Wear, missing teeth and other dental problems can reduce how effectively an older cow processes coarse feed. Oklahoma State University notes that cows around 10 years and older may begin to experience declining dental soundness that makes maintaining intake and body condition more difficult.

That does not mean every 10-year-old belongs on the cull list. A sound older cow that maintains condition, breeds early and raises a strong calf can still be one of the best cows on the place. The question is how well her mouth matches the environment.

An older cow on high-quality hay, supplement and improved pasture may remain productive longer than the same cow asked to graze short, weathered native forage through winter. Teeth become especially important when forage is scarce or coarse because the cow has less room for inefficiency.

Body condition often tells the story before the mouth is examined. If an older cow begins losing weight while herd mates on the same ration remain stable, look closer. Teeth are one possibility, but disease, parasites, competition, lameness and other problems can produce the same result.

Calf performance should also be considered. Research and field observations have long shown that very old cows are more likely to experience declining productivity. Oklahoma State specialists have noted that around age 10, many cows begin weaning smaller calves and facing more health or reproductive problems. That is a population trend, not an expiration date.

A fall mouth check is easiest when cows are already being worked for pregnancy diagnosis, vaccination or weaning. Producers do not need to assign an exact age to every mature cow. They need to identify mouths that are no longer capable of supporting the cow through the coming winter.

The best old cows earn their reputation. They breed back, stay sound and raise calves year after year. Keeping them can make good economic sense. But sentiment should not make a ranch pay for a cow whose teeth no longer allow her to keep up. In the end, the mouth tells you how well she can keep doing the job, not how old she is.

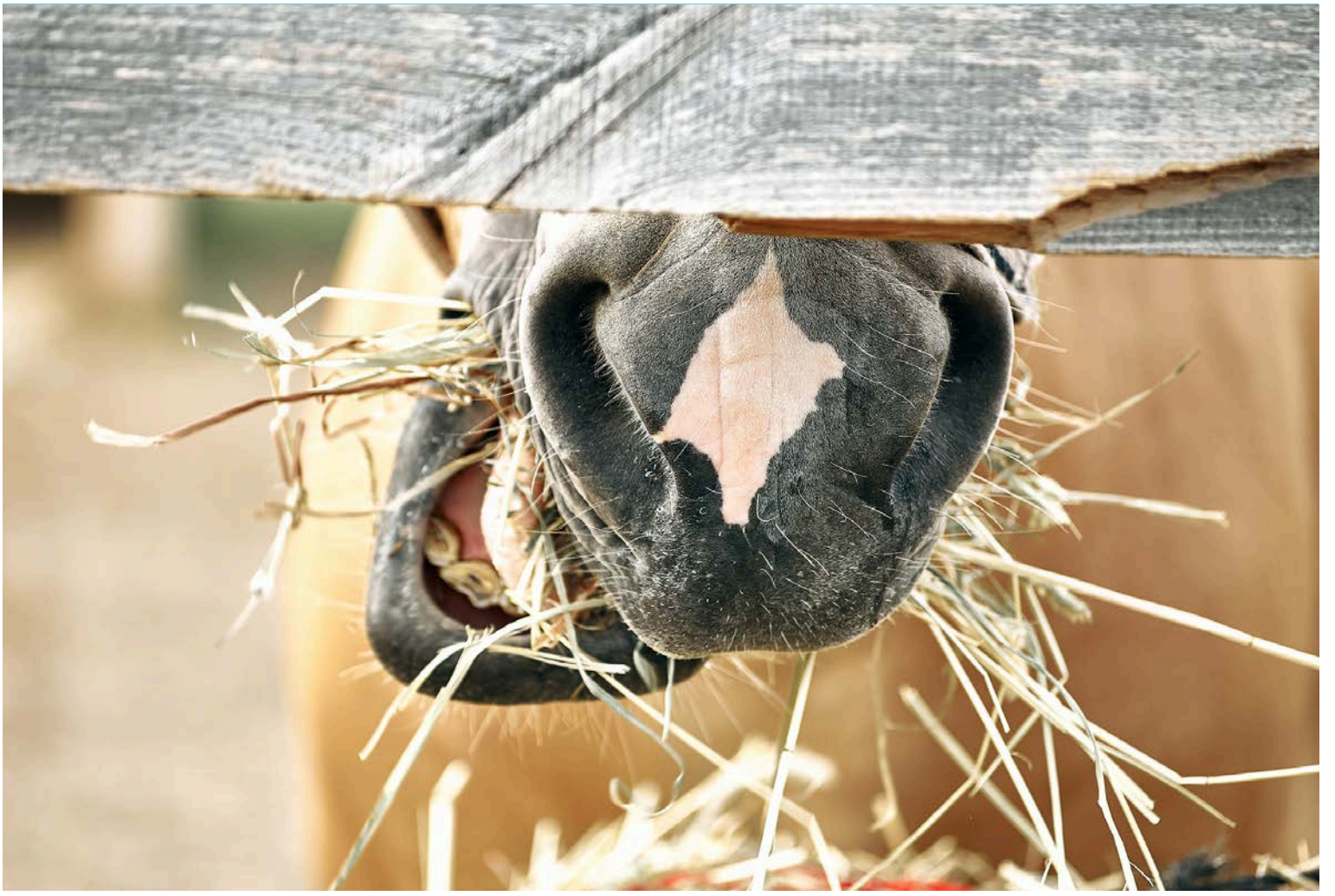
A cow's mouth can also affect how she competes. A younger cow may clean up coarse hay quickly while an older cow spends much longer sorting and chewing. In a crowded feeding area, the old cow can lose twice: she processes feed less efficiently and has less time at the best forage before dominant cattle push her away. Sorting older cows into a separate management group can sometimes extend useful life by giving them better feed and less competition.

Producers should also distinguish incisor problems from total chewing ability. Front teeth gather forage, but cheek teeth do the grinding. Looking only at the incisors gives an incomplete picture. Dropping cud, slow eating, weight loss and manure containing unusually long forage particles are reasons to investigate further.

The economics come back to the calf. An old cow that needs premium feed to maintain herself may still pay if she breeds early and raises one of the heaviest calves in the herd. An equally old cow producing a late, light calf may not. Age is useful context. Production is the verdict.

A horse's teeth never stops changing

By Savannah Magoteaux



A horse's teeth erupt and wear throughout its life, making regular dental examinations an important part of care. (Courtesy photos)

Horse owners often hear that a horse's teeth 'grow all his life.' It is a useful shortcut, but it is not quite correct. Horses have long-crowned teeth with a large portion of each tooth initially hidden below the gum line. As the chewing surface wears, more of that reserve crown erupts into the mouth. Eventually, especially in old age, that reserve is used up.

That design makes sense for an animal built to spend much of the day grinding fibrous plants. Wild forage can be abrasive, and chewing itself creates constant wear. The horse's dental system compensates by bringing more tooth into use over time.

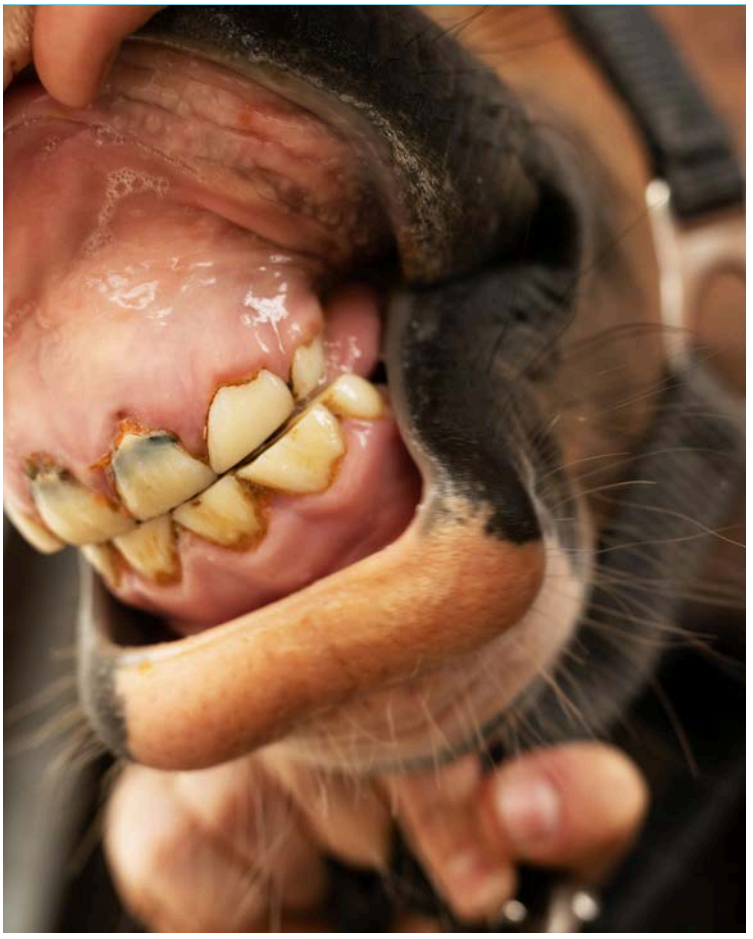
Wear is not always even. The upper jaw is wider than the lower jaw, and horses chew with a side-to-side motion. Sharp enamel points can develop along the outer edge of the upper cheek teeth and the inner edge of the lower teeth. Other abnormalities include hooks, waves, steps and overgrown teeth opposite a missing tooth.

That is the basis for routine dental examinations and, when needed, odontoplasty, commonly called floating. The goal is not to make every tooth perfectly flat. Over-aggressive floating can remove valuable tooth structure. A veterinarian evaluates the whole mouth and corrects problems that interfere with comfortable chewing or normal movement of the jaw.

Age changes the job. AAEP proceedings on geriatric dentistry explain that the long crowns are finite. When enamel and reserve crown are exhausted, older horses can lose an effective grinding surface. Gaps may open between teeth, allowing feed to pack into the spaces and contribute to painful periodontal disease.

Owners often notice the consequences at the feed tub. A horse may chew slowly, drop grain, resist the bit, develop foul breath or begin quidding hay. Quids are wads of partially chewed forage that fall from the mouth because the horse can no longer grind or manipulate them adequately.

Weight loss in an older horse should never be automatically blamed on teeth, but the mouth belongs high on the list. A horse



Examining a horse's mouth can reveal uneven wear, missing teeth and other issues that may affect eating.

with poor dentition may need chopped forage, soaked hay pellets, beet pulp or a complete senior feed that can provide enough fiber in a form the horse can manage. Those diets should be introduced carefully and balanced for the horse's overall needs.

Young horses need dental care too. Eruption of permanent teeth, retained caps, wolf teeth and developing malocclusions can create problems long before old age. The appropriate examination schedule depends on age, use and dental history.

The most accurate way to think about equine teeth is that they are always changing. They erupt, wear, shift and eventually expire. Good dental care cannot make a tooth last forever, but regular examinations can preserve comfortable chewing and help owners adjust management before a dental problem becomes a weight problem.

The incisors at the front of the mouth get most of the attention in old-fashioned horse aging, but the cheek teeth do the work that matters most to nutrition. A horse can have front teeth that look acceptable and still have painful periodontal pockets, fractured cheek teeth or missing grinding surfaces farther back. A full examination generally requires a speculum, light and the ability to see and feel the entire mouth.

Dental problems can also masquerade as training problems. Head tossing, resistance to the bit, difficulty bending, dropping the bit or suddenly objecting to bridling can have many causes, but oral pain belongs on

Continue on page 24



Continued from page 23

the list. Dentistry should not be used to explain every behavior, yet it should not be overlooked because the horse is maintaining weight.

Older horses create a balancing act for practitioners. The goal is to correct painful overgrowths while preserving as much tooth as possible. A young horse may have plenty of reserve crown. A geriatric horse may not. That is why the phrase 'he needs his teeth floated' is less useful than 'he needs a dental examination.' The examination determines whether floating is needed and how much work is appropriate.

Owners can help between appointments by watching how the horse eats. Does he take longer than herd mates? Dunk hay in water? Pack feed in his cheeks? Drop wads of forage? Have unexplained nasal discharge or bad breath? Those details give the veterinarian useful clues and may identify trouble before weight loss becomes obvious.

That slow eruption is why the phrase 'a horse's teeth keep growing' is common, but technically misleading. Horses have a finite reserve crown below the gum line.

As the exposed surface wears, more of that reserve crown erupts. Eventually, especially in older horses, the reserve is used up. Teeth can become short, loose or missing, and the chewing surface may no longer process long-stem forage efficiently.

Dental problems are not always obvious from the outside. A horse may continue eating while dropping partially chewed wads of hay, taking longer to finish meals or losing condition. Other clues can include bad breath, resistance to the bit, head tossing, facial swelling or undigested feed particles in manure. None of those signs identifies a specific dental problem by itself, but each is a reason for an oral examination.



Routine care is also more than simply flowting the points.

Routine care is also more than simply 'floating the points.' A veterinarian evaluates the entire mouth, including tooth wear, symmetry, periodontal disease, loose or fractured teeth and abnormalities that may affect chewing. The goal is not to make every tooth perfectly smooth. It is to maintain a functional mouth while preserving as much useful tooth as possible.

Older horses often need more frequent attention because the margin for correction becomes smaller as reserve crown disappears. Aggressive dental work can remove useful tooth structure that cannot be replaced. That is another reason the examination matters as much as the procedure itself: the plan should fit the individual mouth, age and diet rather than a calendar alone.

MERRY AND BRIGHT FANTASY OF LIGHTS

Scan Me

35th Annual Christmas Festival and Lighted Parade

Saturday, December 5, 2026

Sip & Stroll with me

Friday evening, Dec. 4
5-8 p.m.
Downtown Bowie, Texas
Live Music, Holiday Shopping and more

BOWIE Texas
Community Development
940.872.6246
BCDB@CityofBowieTx.com

Christmas Tour of Homes

The Amity Club Christmas Tour of Homes
Sunday, December 6
from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets $25

Pancakes with Santa

7-10 a.m. Bowie Fire Department at 203 Walnut St., Bowie, TX
Toy Drive Donations accepted. Photos with Santa

FMC Elf 'n Magic Crafts

8-11 a.m. Bowie Public Library at 301 Walnut St., Bowie, TX

Christmas Village

Miniature City of Bowie Christmas Village
The Wildflower Downtown
205 N. Mason Street, Bowie, TX

Christmas Entertainment

Wise Street Mercantile Christmas Party, Hot Dogs, & Goodie Bags
Canned food drive for God's Table
111 W. Wise Street, Bowie, TX

Live Christmas Entertainment and Holiday Songs,
R&K Sound performances by Mateo Coronado, Dylan Edwards and more
Main Stage on Smythe St., Bowie, TX starting at 4:30 p.m.

Community Christmas Tree Lighting

Pre-parade activities Smythe and Tarrant Streets
6:30 p.m. Tree Lighting

Fantasy of Lights Lighted Parade

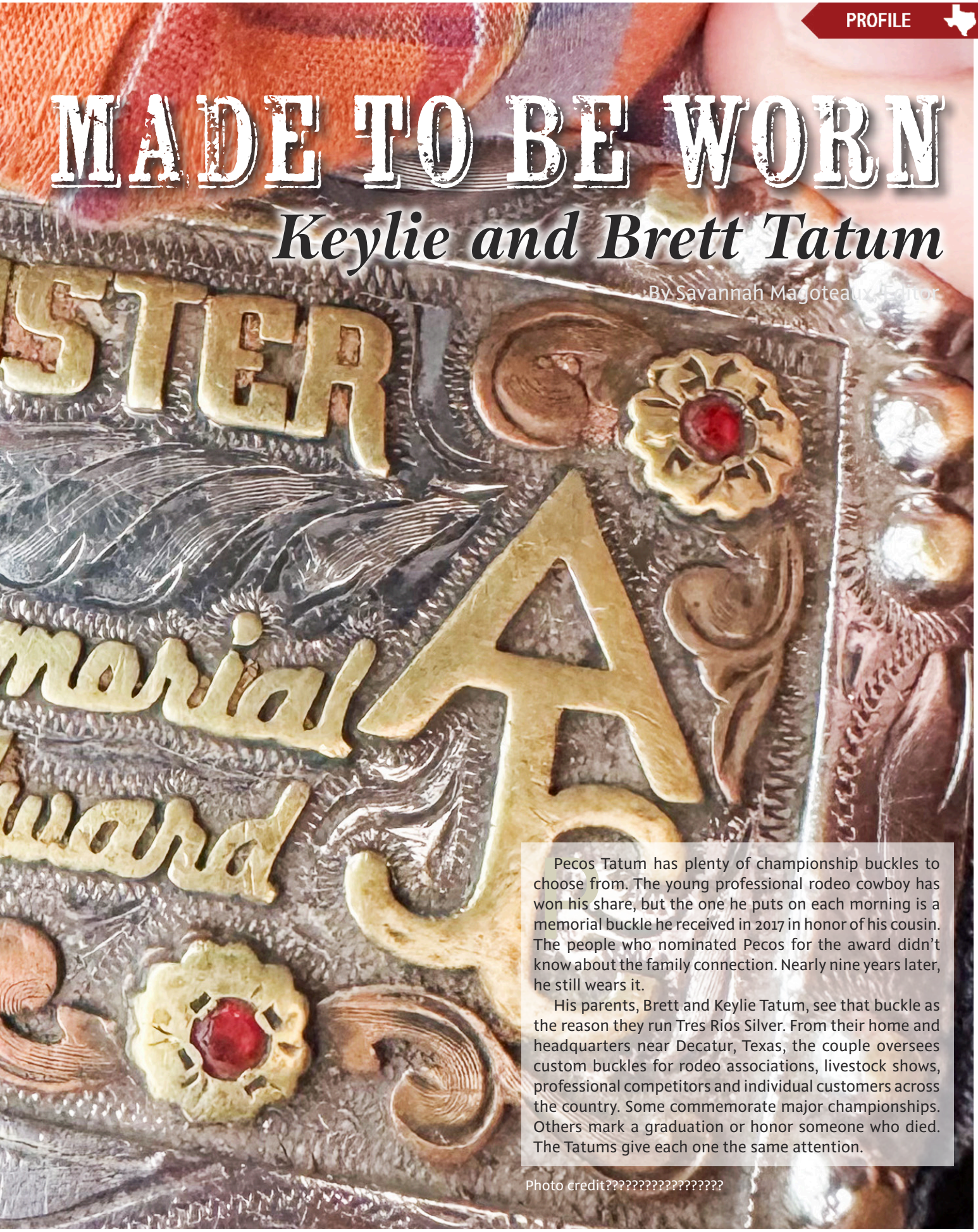
7 p.m. Downtown Bowie, Texas Dec. 5


AARON
CAMP OF CHAMPIONS
20
18

MADE TO BE WORN

Keylie and Brett Tatum

By Savannah Magoteaux, Editor



Pecos Tatum has plenty of championship buckles to choose from. The young professional rodeo cowboy has won his share, but the one he puts on each morning is a memorial buckle he received in 2017 in honor of his cousin. The people who nominated Pecos for the award didn't know about the family connection. Nearly nine years later, he still wears it.

His parents, Brett and Keylie Tatum, see that buckle as the reason they run Tres Rios Silver. From their home and headquarters near Decatur, Texas, the couple oversees custom buckles for rodeo associations, livestock shows, professional competitors and individual customers across the country. Some commemorate major championships. Others mark a graduation or honor someone who died. The Tatums give each one the same attention.

Photo credit??????????????????

A Family Business

Brett and Keylie both grew up in families built around rodeo and ranching.

Brett was born on his family's ranch near Roseburg, Oregon, where his mother's family ran Christensen Brothers, a rodeo stock contracting company. His grandfather, Robert "Bobbie" Christensen, and great-uncle Henry "Hank" Christensen founded the company in 1936.

Both men were inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame in 1989 and into the Rodeo Hall of Fame at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

Both sides of Brett's family worked in rodeo. His childhood took him from Oregon to Arizona and later New Mexico, and Wickenburg, Arizona, was home for most of his early years.

Keylie grew up outside Durango, Colorado, in a ranching and rodeo family. Her father was an all-around cowboy who also worked as a hunting outfitter for more than 20 years, and her mother ran barrels. Relatives appeared in Western films including The Cowboys and City Slickers.

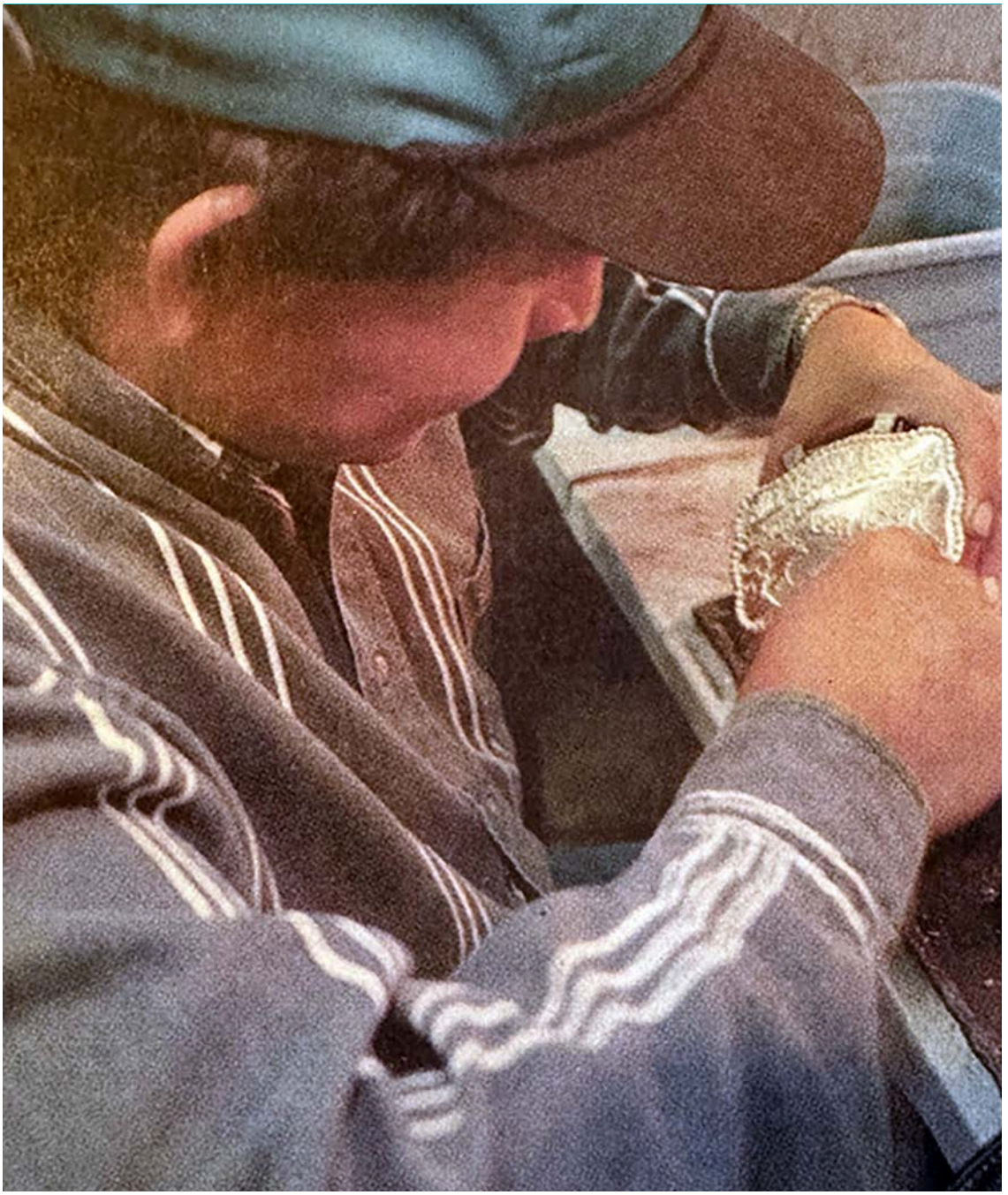
Rodeo brought Brett and Keylie together. Friends introduced them at the National Finals Rodeo in 1999, and they reconnected and started dating in 2001.

Brett rode bulls professionally and later worked as an equine dentist, while Keylie kept competing. In 2008, she won the Women's Professional Rodeo Association world championship in team roping as a header.

By then, the couple had a young son, Pecos, and life on the road was wearing thin. They lived in Wickenburg, but Brett's equine dentistry business kept them traveling most of the year.

"We were like, 'Man, we got to find some roots to lay down,'" Keylie said.

Friends suggested they visit Llano, Texas.



This page and top photos on p. 29: Two of the Native American silversmiths from years past - Albert McCork and Allison Yazzie. (Photos courtesy of Keylie and Brett Tatum)

"We pulled into Llano, and it just felt like home," she said.

They moved to Llano in 2008 and stayed 11 years.

After three years back in the Durango and Farmington, New Mexico, area, they settled near Decatur, where Tres Rios Silver operates today.

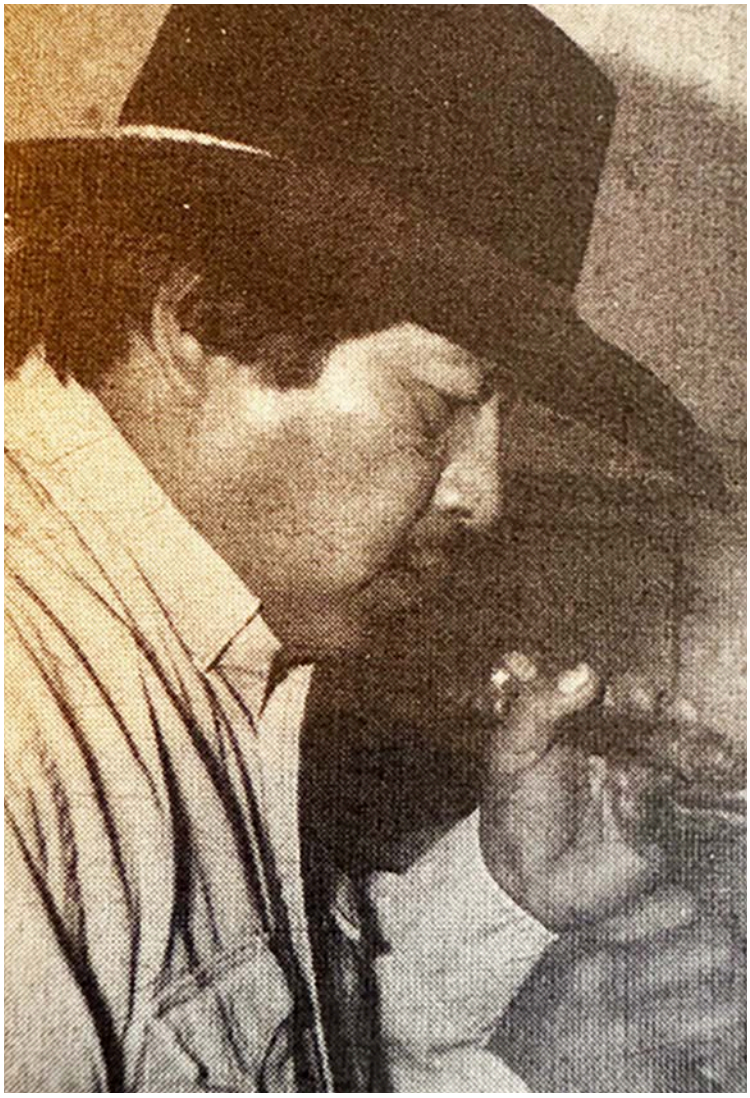
Buckles ran in Brett's family long before the move to Texas. His aunt and uncle, Jim and Dixie, ran a buckle company in Arizona, and his parents were partners in another, Championship Buckles. Over time, family members ran several companies, including Frontier Trophy Buckles, Western Trails Trophy Buckles and Tres Rios Silver.

"At one time there was four companies in my family," Brett said.

He remembers when the country had only a few trophy buckle makers, and his family ran several of them.

His mother, Vicki Christensen, ran Frontier Trophy Buckles and founded Tres Rios Silver in 1997 as a more affordable option for customers buying custom awards.

She named it for the three rivers that meet near Farmington, New Mexico: The Animas,





Right: Some recent creations.



La Plata and San Juan.

The business sat in nearby Aztec, and Vicki chose the Spanish words for three rivers, Tres Rios.

Brett grew up working in the family shops, building buckles alongside relatives and silversmiths.

"We built them all ourselves as a family," he said. "We were in the shop together in the early days."

The family built lasting relationships with Navajo silversmiths in New Mexico, many of whom filled orders on their own using materials the company supplied.

One husband-and-wife team that started working with the

Continue on page 30

Continued from page 29

family when Brett was in junior high still makes buckles for Tres Rios.

Keylie worked for Frontier Trophy Buckles after college, so she knew the business before she and Brett considered buying in.

When the couple moved to Llano, Vicki came with them. Brett and Keylie had been helping with Tres Rios for more than a year when they asked her about becoming partners.

Vicki doubted the company could support two families. Brett and Keylie brought a business plan and predicted they could double sales in the first year.

"And it ended up tripling the first year," Brett said.

They became partners in 2008, and around 2015 or 2016 they bought out the remaining ownership.

The company started as an affordable alternative to traditional trophy buckles. Under the Tatums, it developed its own designs and its own way of building them.

Built to Last

Around 2017 or 2018, Brett and Keylie stopped making plated buckles and went back to natural metals: German silver, sterling silver, jeweler's brass, bronze, copper and gold.

Plated buckles look good new, Brett said, but the plating can wear off. The couple wanted buckles customers could wear for decades.

"We want them to wear them for 30, 40 years on their belts," Brett said. "We want to build belt buckles, not drawer buckles."

Natural metals also make repairs easier. Competitors who wear buckles while riding and working horses bang them up, and with the metals Tres Rios uses now, the shop can often fix a damaged buckle instead of replacing it.

The switch also took the company back to the methods Brett learned as a kid in the family's Arizona shop.

The Tatums still rely on hand-cut designs and traditional craftsmanship. They use machines for some intricate logos, but silversmiths do most of the work by hand.

The Decatur headquarters handles design, sales, shipping and business operations. Partner shops, including several in New Mexico, build the buckles and ship them to Texas, where the staff inspects, finishes and sends them to customers.

Depending on workload, Tres Rios works with about 30 silversmiths, and Brett said those long relationships remain central to the operation.

The Decatur office runs with a small staff. Designer Richard "Pee-Wee" Kolb has worked with the company for about 16 years.

Continue on page 33



Twenty-one-year-old Pecos Tatum is an accomplished calf-roper competing in the PRCA.



Pecos, Keylie, and Brett Tatum.

Continued from page 30

He still lives in Llano and works remotely, staying connected to the office through internet phones.

The rest of the team includes bookkeeper Bethany Anderson, designers Rick Netherly and Jesse Christensen, and Lauren Barton, who handles shipping and helps around the office. Jesse, Brett's cousin, joined recently, bringing another Christensen into the business.

Keylie runs nearly all of the company's marketing and social media. Brett works on design and daily operations.

The couple has also built up the Tres Rios brand, and its TR logo has become the company's signature in the Western industry.

Customers include the National Western Stock Show and the National Little Britches Rodeo Association. The company has also made buckles for Garth Brooks and Willie Nelson.

Recently, Tres Rios produced Gibson guitar-themed buckles for Nashville's Music City Rodeo, which debuted at Bridgestone Arena in 2025.

Some of the projects that matter most to the Tatums are much smaller. Brett said the company reminds its designers that a single buckle carries as much weight as a big order.

"The one buckle you build for the one kid that graduated high school, or the memorial buckle for someone's son that died, those are just as important as the 1,000 that we build for Little Britches," he said.

Brett and Keylie know that from their own years in the arena. Keylie owns a world championship buckle but rarely wears it. She prefers smaller, ranch-style buckles.

"That's not who I am. That's what I did, and we are Tres Rios," she said.

Pecos takes the same approach, wearing the memorial buckle despite his own wins in professional rodeo.

"We just want them to wear it," Keylie said. "That's our main goal. We want it to be something special that they want to actually wear."

Tres Rios Silver turns 30 in 2027, and the Tatums are building other ventures alongside it.

They recently opened a retail store for Tomahawk Saddlery, a Brazilian company that makes saddles, saddle pads, bridles, halters and other tack. The shop sits next to Tres Rios Silver on the couple's property south of Decatur.

The partnership started when Tomahawk asked the Tatums to help develop a calf roping saddle and tree. With input from Pecos and other ropers who spend time at the property, the project grew into a second business.

The property stays busy. With covered stalls and RV hookups,



Every buckle is special, and treated as such at Tres Rios Silver.



From youth art shows to PBR events, Tres Rios produces great buckles for all.

the Tatums host friends and rodeo competitors.

After they leave the buckle office in the afternoon, they spend evenings riding, roping and working horses.

Keylie still competes professionally, now in breakaway roping. Pecos is building his own rodeo career, and his parents say he wants to try auctioneering and someday become a stock contractor like his great-grandfather.

The Tatums have no set plans to grow the company.

"We're just the stewards of His business, and whatever He has in store, that's the direction that we're going to go with it," Keylie said.

Tres Rios stays about seven weeks ahead in production, allowing the couple to stay organized and focused on fulfilling the orders directly in front of them. Brett said they once wanted to be the biggest and best company in the industry. Now they care more about meeting their own standards.

"We want to do the best job that we can do, and provide our customers with buckles that they're proud to give and proud to wear," he said.

HOWDY CHRISTMAS

Holiday Gift Guide



SADDLE UP FOR A COUNTRY CHRISTMAS!

Grab your boots, wrangle up that Christmas list, and mosey on down to shop local this holiday season! From one-of-a-kind treasures and western wear to gifts sweeter than a peppermint latte, you're sure to find something for everyone on your nice list. Skip the long trail to the big-box stores and discover the hometown charm, friendly faces and hidden gems right here in our neck of the woods.

JUSTIN DISCOUNT BOOTS
AND COWBOY OUTFITTERS
World's Largest Western Wear Outlet Store



Bold color meets classic Western style. These R Watson Boots feature rich rhubarb roughout vamps paired with sleek black shafts and striking silver stitching. A Western classic with a little extra attitude!
101 N. Hwy 156, Justin, TX.
justindiscountboots.com

American HAT COMPANY, INC.



Black felt 40X hat is just what y our cowboy need to complete any outfit! Bowie, Texas www.americanhat.com

THE HAPPY TOYMAKER
HANDMADE IN TEXAS USA BY TEXANS



The basic semi truck with a sleeper cab is very realistic and detailed. Made from metal. Any Happy Toymaker trailer will hook on. www.happytoymaker.com

JAMES WOOD MOTORS • DECATUR



Come see the 2027 GMC Line Up!
2111 S. Hwy 287, Decatur, TX.
940-627-2177,
JamesWoodDecatur.com

TESKEY'S Outdoors



Great gifts for the gun enthusiast in your life from Teskey's Outdoors. Located in Weatherford, TX. Shop in store or online at: TeskeysOutdoors.com

WAGGONER'S
NOT JUST A BOOT STORE
EST. 1947



Check out these Twisted X slip shoes! The perfect gift, practical and comforable. 203 E. Omega St., Henrietta, TX. 940-538-4058.

WHEN A CITY GIRL goes country

By Annette Bridges

Where gratitude and grief meet

There was a time when I thought ranch life belonged mostly to my husband.

He understood cattle, hay, weather, equipment, and all the rhythms of country life that once felt completely foreign to this city girl.

For years, I stood more on the edges of ranch life than in the middle of it — raising our daughter, homeschooling, keeping our household running, and quietly trying not to embarrass myself in a world where everybody else seemed to know exactly what they were doing.

What I didn't realize then was that ranch life was shaping me anyway.

Slowly. Quietly. Season by season

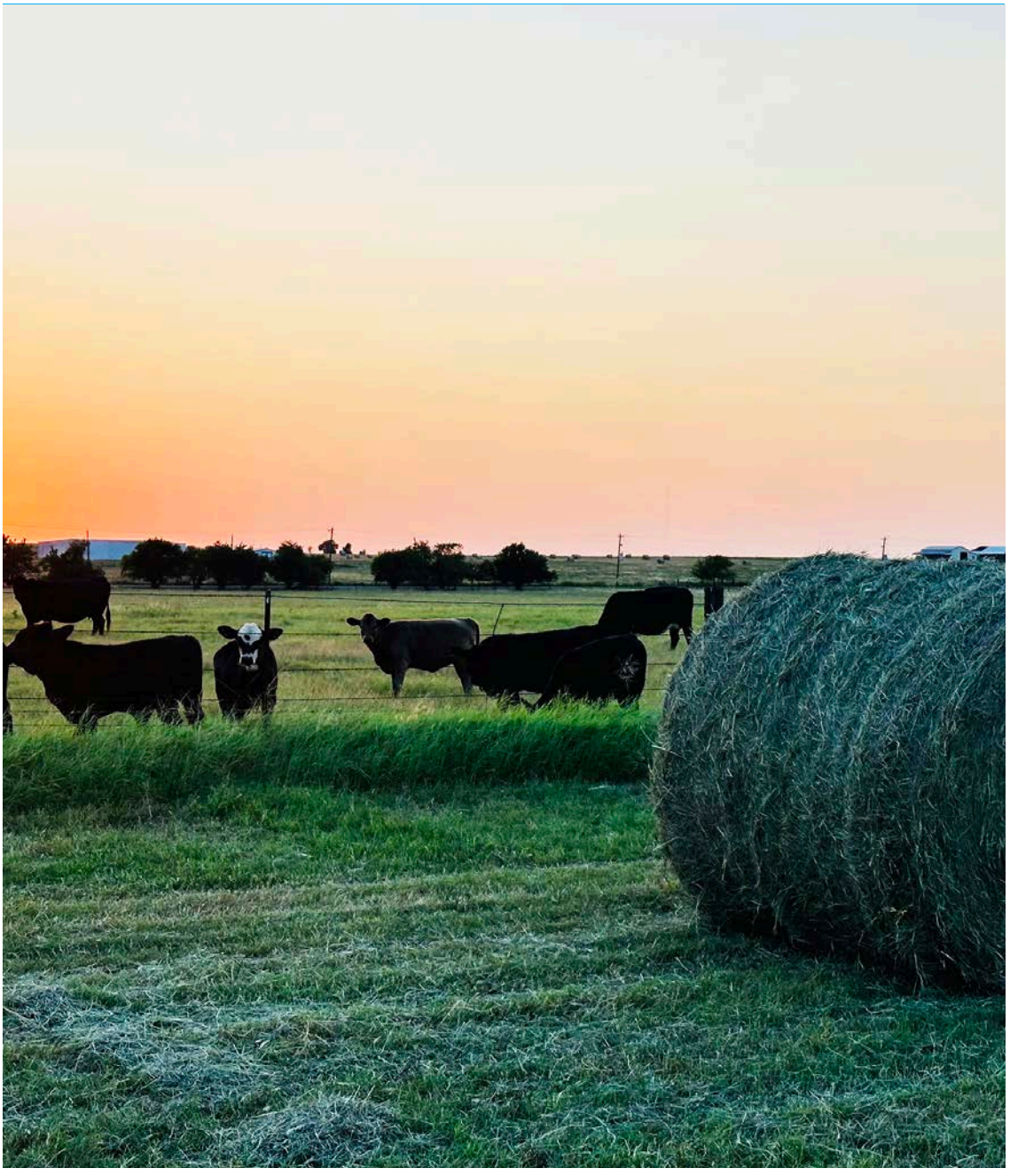
.Back then, I thought strength looked loud and confident. I thought country women probably came into this life naturally knowing how to drive a tractor, work cattle, cook for a crew, and recognize every problem before it happened.

I knew none of those things.

But over time, ranch life taught me something far more valuable than ranch skills.

It taught me resilience.

It taught me how quickly plans can change because of weather, drought, broken equipment, sick calves, or the simple unpredictability of caring for living things. It taught me flexibility, patience, and how to keep moving forward even when things don't unfold the way you



Quiet moments on the ranch can offer space for reflection as the seasons and family life change. (Photo courtesy of Annette BRidges)

Gratitude

hoped they would.

It also taught me the quiet beauty hidden inside ordinary days.

Seeing the sun rise over our barn. Hay bales lined neatly waiting for winter's arrival. The sound of cattle calling at feeding time. Watching the herd graze quietly as the sun slipped lower in the sky. The familiar comfort of sitting down to supper together at the end of the day.

Country life has a way of slowing your eyes enough to notice things city life once hurried me past.

I became grateful for things I never would have noticed in my younger city life.

Calves running and chasing each other across a pasture as if they had nowhere important to be. A newborn calf nursing while its mamma stood quietly still. One cow gently licking another one as they rested side by side in the grass.

There is a tenderness in a herd people rarely talk about.

And somewhere along the way, these cattle stopped feeling like "his herd" and started feeling like part of our shared history.

That's what makes ranch life difficult to explain to people who've never lived it.

They sometimes think ranch decisions are mostly financial ones. Numbers on paper. Buy. Sell. Downsize. Move on.

But when you've spent years feeding animals through ice storms, nursing sick calves, watching over pastures through drought and flood, attachment has a way of quietly settling into your bones.

And perhaps that's why gratitude and grief sometimes live so close together.

Perhaps grief doesn't always wait until something is gone.

Sometimes it uietly arrives the moment you begin realizing how deeply a place, a routine, or a life season has woven itself into your heart.

Suddenly, all of those ordinary moments feel different.

Not because they are ending today, but because somewhere deep inside, you understand life does not stand still forever.

Because the things we are most thankful for are often the very things hardest to imagine changing someday. But life, like the seasons themselves, was never meant to stand still forever.

These days, during these early fall evenings, I find myself looking across the ranch with a deeper appreciation than I once had as that nervous young city girl all those years ago.

And I know now that this life gave me far more than I understood when I first arrived here.

It gave me confidence. Partnership. Strength I didn't know I possessed. A deeper appreciation for hard work, quiet beauty, shared responsibility, and the rhythms of nature itself.

Most of all, it gave me a grateful heart for a life season that shaped me in ways I never could have imagined.

And perhaps that is where gratitude and grief walk together for a time... until gratitude slowly begins to heal what grief fears losing.



DAVIS & BLEVINS GALLERY

LOCATED ON THE HISTORIC TOWN SQUARE IN DOWNTOWN SAINT JO, TX

108 S. Main Street | 940-995-2786 | sjmainstreetgallery.com

WED - FRI 10AM - 5PM | SAT 10AM - 6PM | SUN 12PM - 4PM









SJMAINSTREETGALLERY.COM FOR AVAILABLE WORKS & INFO











ONE OF A KIND HANDCRAFTED JEWELRY, ACCESSORIES, HOME DÉCOR, CLOTHING, GIFTS, AND FINE ART!

/themainstreetgallery @davisblevinsgallery info@sjmainstreetgallery.com

Memories in the church cookbook

By NTFR Staff

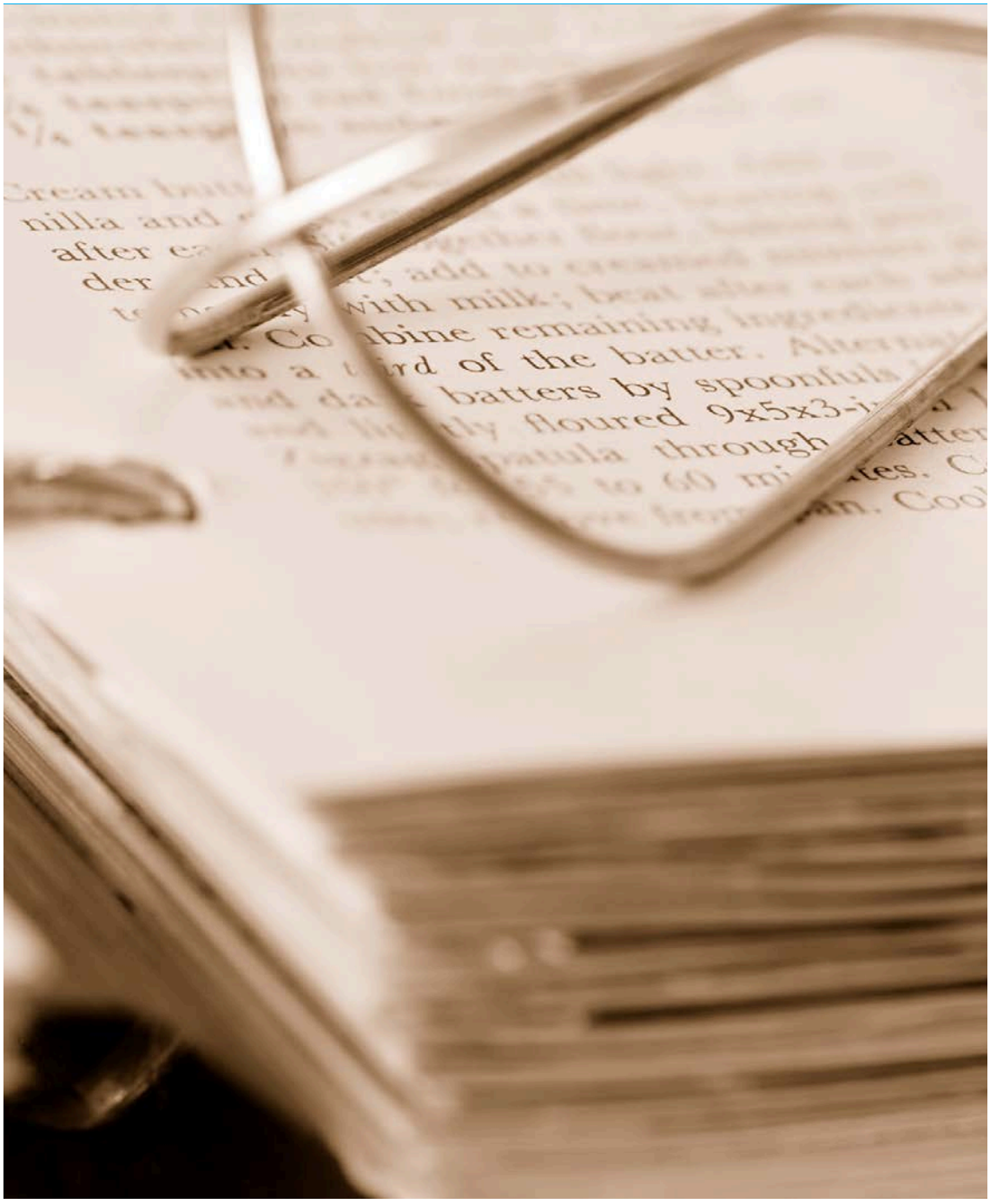
A community cookbook rarely looks important. The binding may be plastic. The cover may have a church sketch, county map or 4-H clover. Recipes are typed in different styles and sometimes credited simply to 'Mrs. John Smith.' Yet a shelf of those little books can hold as much local history as a formal archive.

Community cookbooks grew out of women's clubs, churches, schools, extension groups and civic organizations looking for a practical way to raise money. Members contributed recipes, volunteers assembled them and families bought copies because the cooks were people they knew. The result was part cookbook and part community directory.

Open one from the 1950s or 1960s and the ingredients immediately locate it in time. Canned soup, gelatin, shortening and packaged mixes appear beside scratch biscuits, wild game, home-canned vegetables and cakes that assume the reader already knows basic technique. Earlier books may include measurements such as a lump of butter the size of an egg or instructions to bake in a 'moderate oven.'

The recipes show technology changing. Icebox desserts give way to refrigerator cakes. Electric mixers reduce the need for long hand beating. Freezers make ingredients available out of season. Convenience foods enter casseroles. Microwave instructions eventually appear. A single recipe category can become a timeline of the American kitchen.

Names may be even more valuable than ingredients. Church cookbooks document congregations. School books preserve generations of parents and teachers. Extension and home demonstration club books record networks of rural women whose labor rarely appeared in newspapers or official histories.



Open a cookbook from decades ago, and the ingredients will likely tell the time it was made. (Courtesy photos)

They also capture regional foodways. A North Texas collection may include pecan pies, venison, calf fries, chili, cobblers, barbecue sauces and recipes shaped by Mexican, German, Czech, Southern and Indigenous food traditions. What appears depends on the community that compiled the book.

Historians use cookbooks because food records ordinary life in a way formal documents often do not. The Smithsonian's

Continue on page 40

Continued from page 39

food history collections treat cookbooks as evidence of changing ingredients, household roles, technology and regional identity.

Even nationally published cookbooks can show the emergence of American food traditions. Community books bring that lens down to a single town or congregation.

They are also imperfect records. Recipes were sometimes copied from packages, newspapers or neighbors. Attribution could be inconsistent.

A recipe under one woman's name may have traveled through five kitchens before it reached the page. That does not make the book less useful. It shows how food knowledge moved.

For families, the most important line may be the name at the bottom. A casserole that looks ordinary becomes different when it belonged to a grandmother, teacher or ranch neighbor. Handwritten notes in the margins make it even more personal: 'use less sugar,' 'good for branding crew,' or simply 'Daddy likes this.'

That is why these books deserve better than a box at an estate sale. They are working records of community life. Before tossing an old spiral-bound cookbook because the recipes look dated, read the names. Read the advertisements. Read what people thought was worth sharing. The history is already there.

The advertisements deserve attention too. Many community cookbooks sold small blocks of space to local banks, feed stores, funeral homes, implement dealers, beauty shops and insurance agents. Decades later, those pages can reconstruct a business district that no longer exists. A recipe book becomes a snapshot of the local economy.

The books also document what counted as special-occasion food. A church cookbook may devote pages to cakes, candies, punch and party sandwiches, giving a better picture of showers, funerals, reunions and holiday gatherings than a formal history ever could. Recipes labeled 'company casserole' or 'funeral potatoes' tell us when and why a dish was served.



Worn pages of the cookbook reveal which recipes were actually used.

Readers can keep the story going themselves: dig out the oldest community cookbook on your own shelf and take a look at the cover, the publication date and whichever recipe you still make. The best local history is often still sitting in somebody's kitchen drawer.

Preservation matters because the bindings are often cheap and paper can become brittle. Libraries and local historical societies may accept significant examples, particularly books tied to organizations, towns or ethnic communities that are poorly documented elsewhere. Families can also scan covers, title pages and handwritten notes before the original deteriorates.

The value of these books is often in the details no editor intended to preserve. A recipe may call for a No. 2 can, a cake of compressed yeast, oleo, sour milk or a particular brand that once sat on every grocery shelf.

Instructions such as 'bake in a moderate oven' assume a level of kitchen knowledge that modern recipes spell out in degrees and minutes.

Those little clues show how equipment, ingredients and expectations changed from one generation to the next.

They also preserve names. A professionally published cookbook may tell readers where a recipe came from in broad terms. A church or extension cookbook may tell you exactly who made it.

Decades later, that line of type can connect a recipe to a family, a town and a community organization. In that sense, the cookbook shelf can function almost like a local archive, only one with grease spots and handwritten notes in the margins.

For anyone lucky enough to inherit one, the most interesting page may not be the prettiest recipe. It may be the one with substitutions penciled beside the ingredients, a child's handwriting in the back or a clipping tucked between two pages. Those marks are part of the record, too.

Digitizing a community cookbook preserves the words, but the physical copy tells another story. Advertisements from local banks, feed stores and funeral homes can date the book and show which businesses supported the organization.

Worn pages reveal which recipes were actually used. For local historians, those ordinary books can be unexpectedly rich primary sources.

How the turkey won the race

By NTFR Staff

Thanksgiving without turkey feels wrong to many Americans, which makes it easy to assume the bird has always been the unquestioned centerpiece. The history is messier.

Turkeys are native to North America and were domesticated by Indigenous peoples long before Europeans arrived. Archaeological evidence shows turkey husbandry in Mexico roughly 2,000 years ago, and Native communities in the Southwest also kept turkeys. Feathers may have been an early reason for domestication before the birds became widely important as food.

When Europeans encountered turkeys, the bird traveled quickly across the Atlantic. By the 1500s, domestic turkeys had become fashionable in Europe. Some of those birds, descended from Mexican stock, later returned across the Atlantic with European settlers.

Wild turkey may have been eaten at the Plymouth harvest gathering in 1621, but the surviving record does not identify turkey as the centerpiece. Edward Winslow wrote that colonists went 'fowling,' while William Bradford separately described plentiful wild turkeys in the colony that autumn. Historians are confident the meal included wildfowl and venison. They cannot prove that a roast turkey sat at the center of a table the way it does today.



Turkey became the familiar Thanksgiving centerpiece over generations of changing food traditions. (Courtesy photos)

The stronger link developed in the 1800s. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book, spent decades advocating for a national Thanksgiving holiday. She published menus, recipes and descriptions of the celebration that helped standardize what families imagined Thanksgiving should look like. Roast turkey was part of that picture.

Turkey also made practical sense. One bird could feed a large gathering. It was big enough to feel celebratory and, unlike a dairy cow or laying hen, slaughtering a turkey did not remove an animal that supplied another regular product. Turkey had already become familiar as a feast food.

President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving observance in 1863 during the Civil War. By then, Hale had been promoting the holiday for years. The annual celebration continued, and turkey became increasingly fixed in the American imagination through cookbooks, illustrations, newspaper menus and advertising.

Today's Thanksgiving bird is different from the wild turkey seen in a North Texas pasture. Commercial breeding emphasized rapid growth and breast meat, producing the Broad Breasted White that dominates modern production. Heritage breeds preserve more traditional body types and genetic lines, although they represent a

Continue on page 42



Roasted turkey became the signature centerpiece of many American Thanksgiving dinners.

Continued from page 41
small share of the market.

The familiar dinner is also a collection of foods with different origins. Potatoes came from South America. Cranberries are native to North America. Pumpkins and other squashes were cultivated by Indigenous peoples. The holiday table became American by bringing together foods, traditions and people from many places.

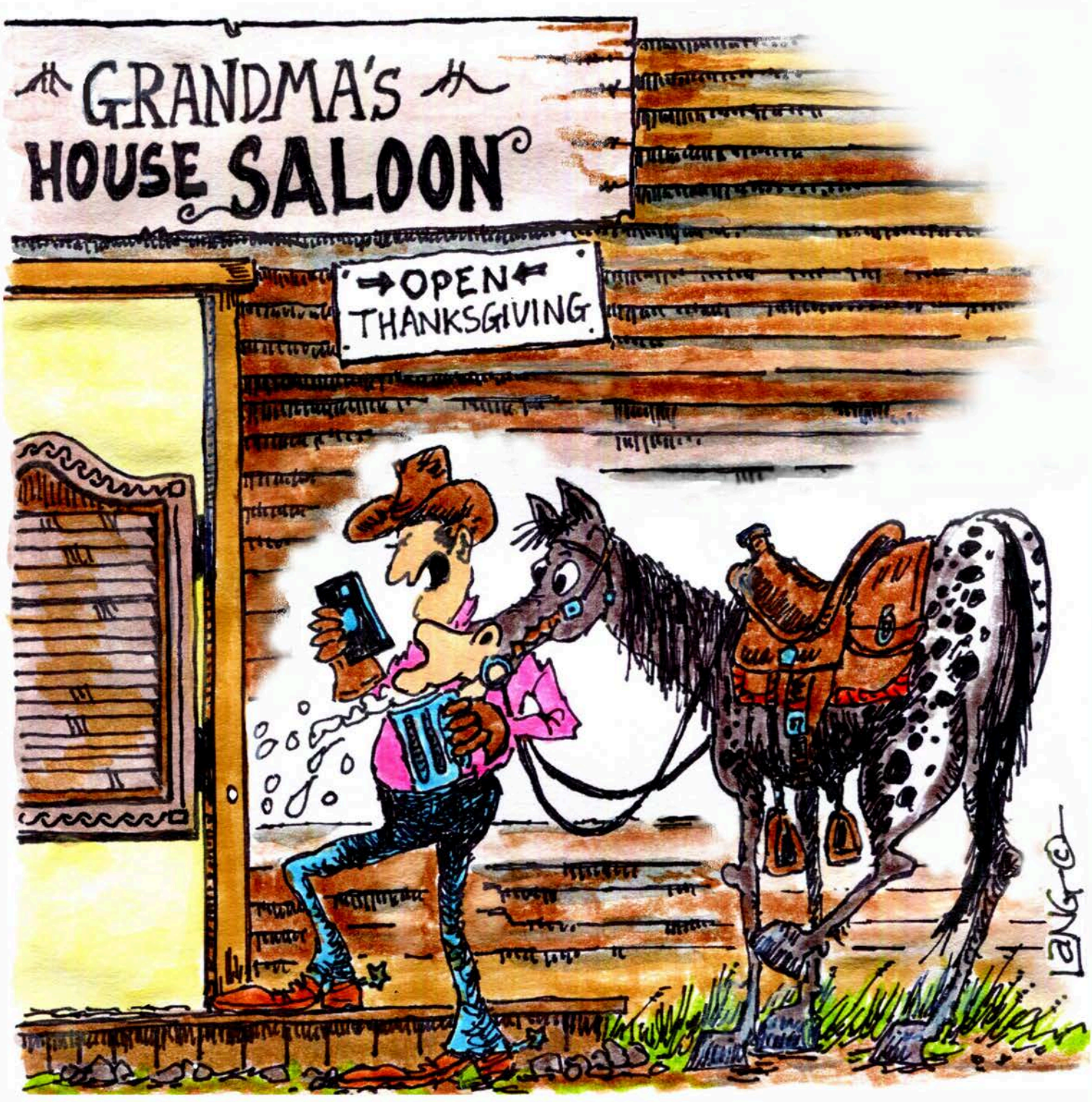
Turkey did not become Thanksgiving dinner because the 1621 gathering established an unbroken rule. It became the bird of the holiday because it was native, available, large enough for a crowd and repeatedly promoted as the centerpiece until the association became almost impossible to separate.

The bird's biology helped too. Wild turkeys are large native game birds, while domestic turkeys could be raised around a farmstead and finished for a fall feast. A goose could serve a family, but a large turkey could serve a crowd. That practicality fit a holiday increasingly centered on extended-family gatherings.

The modern bird also tells a livestock story. Commercial turkey production changed dramatically in the 20th century as breeders selected for efficient growth, white feathers and a larger breast. Those traits lowered cost and produced the uniform birds consumers expected, while also widening the gap between commercial turkeys and their wild relatives.

North Texas readers see wild turkeys regularly, and it is worth remembering that the bird crossing a ranch road and the bird in the grocery freezer are the same species, Meleagris gallopavo. Generations of selective breeding have made their body types and lifestyles very different.

Grub Time



"GOSH-DURNIT SPARKY! WE WENT TO THE WRONG GRANDMA'S HOUSE AGAIN!"

Crispy beef and veggies

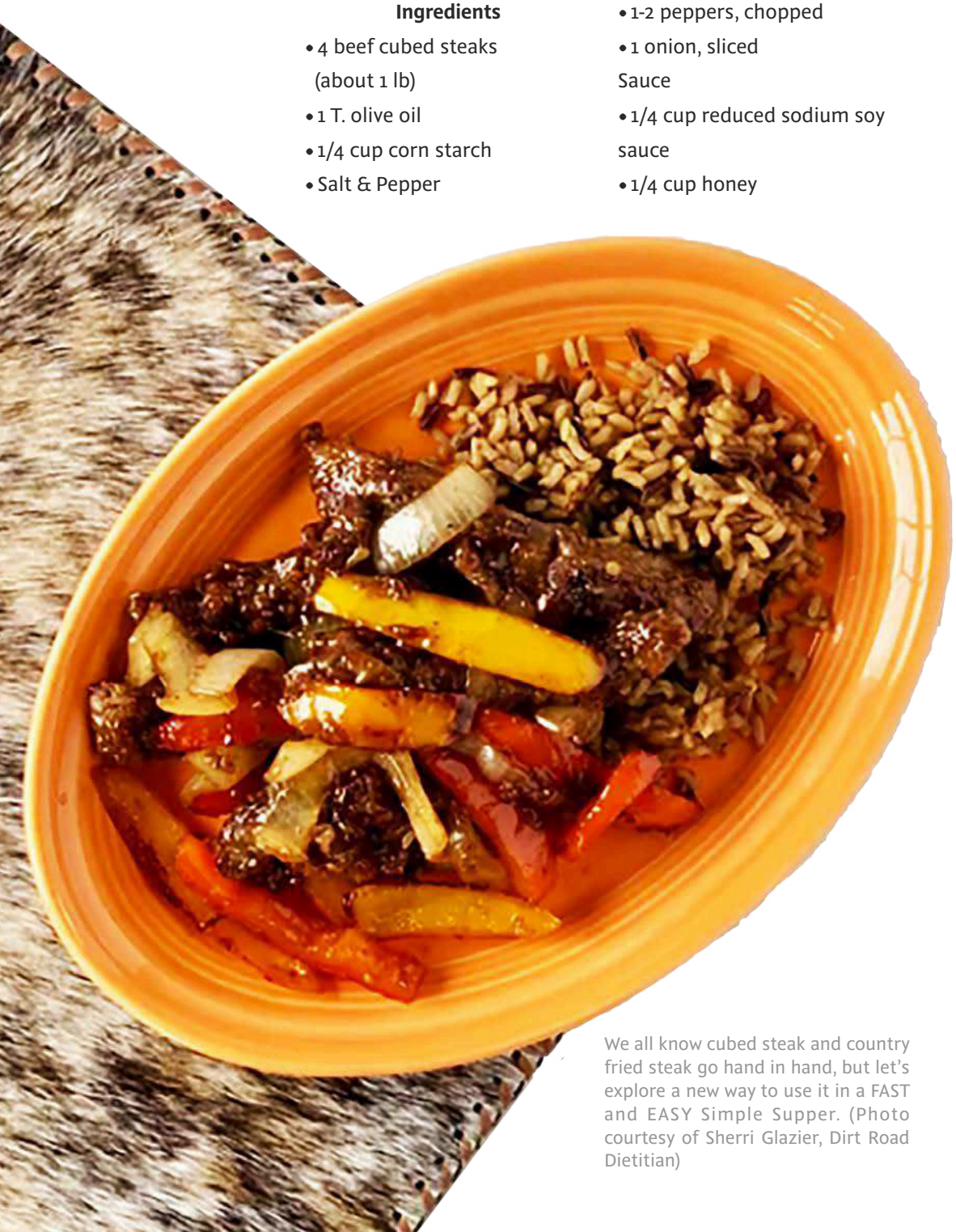
By Sheri Glazier | Dirt Road Dietitian | DirtRoadDietitian.com

Ingredients

- 4 beef cubed steaks (about 1 lb)
- 1 T. olive oil
- 1/4 cup corn starch
- Salt & Pepper
- 1-2 peppers, chopped
- 1 onion, sliced

Sauce

- 1/4 cup reduced sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 cup honey



We all know cubed steak and country fried steak go hand in hand, but let's explore a new way to use it in a FAST and EASY Simple Supper. (Photo courtesy of Sherri Glazier, Dirt Road Dietitian)

Instructions

Place 1/4 cup corn starch in bowl and season with salt and pepper.

Slice cube steaks in to strips.

Coat steak slices in corn starch & let it absorb for a few minutes.

Heat 1 T. oil in non-stick skillet. Working in batches, brown and crisp up steak slices.

Place cooked steak in a bowl and keep warm.

While the steak is cooking, prep & slice vegetables.

Once steak is all cooked, add another 1 T. oil to skillet and sauce vegetables.

While vegetables are cooking, mix together the sauce ingredients.

Add the sauce to the vegetables & stir.

Add the cooked steak back to the skillet, stir, and let simmer in vegetables & sauce.

Serve immediately with your favorite sides & watch it disappear!

Notes

1 zucchini and mushrooms work well as vegetables too! If you run low on corn starch use an extra 1/4 cup - its purely a suggestion! The corn starch on the meat helps serve as an easy way to thicken the sauce up in mere minutes!

The day the mail came to the gate

By Ann Asher

There was a time when living several miles from town meant riding those miles simply to find out whether you had mail. City residents began receiving free home delivery in 1863, but rural Americans still traveled to the post office for decades afterward.

That mattered in a country where rural people were a majority. In 1890, nearly 41 million Americans, about 65 percent of the population, lived in rural areas. Postmaster General John Wanamaker argued that it made more sense for one carrier to deliver mail than for dozens of farm families to make individual trips into town.

Congress funded an experiment, and Rural Free Delivery began on October 1, 1896, from three West Virginia post offices. The idea spread rapidly. Within a year, routes were operating in 29 states. RFD became a permanent national service in 1902.

Texas joined early. Postal Service records show Rural Free Delivery beginning at Fate and La Grange on August 1, 1899, with routes soon appearing in communities across the state. For a farm family, the change could turn a several-hour trip into a daily stop at the end of the lane.

The mail carried far more than letters. Newspapers arrived while the news was still fresh. Farm publications brought market reports and new production ideas. Seed catalogs and mail-order companies opened access to goods that local stores might not carry. Correspondence reduced the isolation of rural life.

The mailbox itself had to evolve. Early rural customers used whatever would hold mail: wooden boxes, lard pails, syrup cans, cigar boxes and even pieces of stovepipe. Postal officials



eventually required standardized weatherproof boxes that a carrier could reach without climbing down from the wagon.

RFD also changed roads. The Postal Service expected rural routes to be passable. Communities wanting delivery had an incentive to improve bridges and roads, and the growth of rural mail became intertwined with better transportation.

Carriers functioned almost like traveling post offices. They sold stamps and money orders, registered letters and became familiar figures along rural routes. At first they supplied their own transportation, often horses and wagons. By the late 1920s, improved roads had pushed rural delivery strongly toward automobiles.

Parcel Post expanded the effect after 1913 by allowing larger packages to move through the postal system. Together with mail-order catalogs, it made the rural mailbox part of American commerce as well as communication.

Today a roadside box can seem like one more ranch chore when the door breaks or the post leans after a storm. Historically, it represented a major shift. The farm was no longer as far from the newspaper, the merchant, the government office or the relative living two states away.

The rural mailbox changed America because it shortened distance without moving the house. The road to town stayed the same length. The world simply began arriving at the gate.

The mail-order boom is hard to separate from RFD. Sears, Montgomery Ward and other companies could put thick catalogs in rural homes, but delivery made ordering more practical and predictable. The catalog became part hardware store, department store and wish book. Farm families could compare prices without leaving home.

RFD also affected local post offices. As routes expanded, some small offices and older star-route services were consolidated or eliminated. Convenience at the gate therefore came with a reorganization of the postal landscape. The system was more centralized even as service to individual homes improved.

The carrier became a community connection in another sense. Rural carriers knew washed-out roads, new babies, illnesses and which gate was likely to be chained. That personal familiarity is difficult to quantify, but historical accounts repeatedly describe RFD as reducing rural isolation. The mailbox was infrastructure, but the person serving it mattered too.

North Texas has its own place in that story. USPS chronology lists early Rural Free Delivery routes reaching communities including Fate, La Grange, Alvin, Weston, Hillsboro and Grandview within just a few years of the program's 1896 start.

Rural Free Delivery did more than save a trip to the post office. It changed what could arrive at a farmstead and how quickly rural families could participate in the broader economy. Newspapers and magazines came more regularly. Catalog companies could reach customers far from city stores. Letters, notices and business correspondence moved with less friction, shrinking some of the practical distance between farm families and town.

The service also pushed communities to improve roads. Early rural routes had to be passable enough for carriers to travel them consistently, and local road conditions became tied to whether mail could be delivered. In that way, a federal mail program helped accelerate pressure for better rural transportation long before paved roads became ordinary.

The familiar roadside box eventually became such a normal part of rural life that its importance is easy to miss. But the mailbox represented access: to information, markets, family news and goods that once required a day away from the farm.

Texas was part of the early expansion. Rural Free Delivery routes were established at places including Fate and La Grange in 1899 as the Post Office Department tested and extended service across the country. Within a few years, what had begun as an experiment was a permanent national program, and the daily arrival of a carrier became part of rural routine.

Parcel Post, introduced later, widened the effect by making it easier to send packages as well as letters. Mail-order businesses benefited, but so did farm families who could receive tools, household goods, clothing and replacement parts without traveling to a distant store. The mailbox became a connection to a much larger marketplace.

Reading tracks after the rain

By Ann Asher

A November rain can erase yesterday's sign and create a fresh page. Soft mud along a tank, creek crossing, ranch road or field edge records who passed after the storm. Tracks will not tell every story, but a few basic details can separate deer from hogs and coyotes from domestic dogs.

Start with shape before size. White-tailed deer leave a split hoof print with two pointed toes. On firm ground, the print can look narrow and heart-shaped. In deep mud, the rear dewclaws may register behind the main hoof, which can make a deer track look larger and more complicated.

Feral hog tracks are also cloven, but they tend to look rounder and wider than deer tracks. The toes are usually more blunt and spread, and dewclaws often show in soft mud. A single print can be misleading, so follow the trail and compare several.

Canine tracks have four toes and a central pad. Coyote tracks often look compact and oval, with the two middle toes pointing forward. Domestic dog tracks are frequently rounder and more splayed, although size and substrate create plenty of overlap.

The trail pattern helps: coyotes often travel efficiently in a relatively straight line, while loose dogs may wander.

Bobcats also leave four toes, but cat tracks usually lack obvious claw marks because the claws are retracted during normal walking. The heel pad is broader and shaped differently from a canine pad. Again, one muddy blob is not enough. Find the cleanest prints in the sequence.

Raccoon tracks are hard to confuse once you recognize them. They have five long toes that can look almost hand-like. The front foot is smaller; the hind foot is longer and can resemble a tiny human footprint.



Fresh mud can preserve tracks long enough to reveal which animals have crossed a trail since the rain. (Courtesy photo)

Turkey tracks show three long forward toes with a shorter rear toe. Armadillo sign can look messy, with long claw marks and a distinctive shuffling trail. Around water, turtles, herons and small mammals add even more variety.

Freshness matters. Crisp edges and undisturbed detail usually indicate a recent track, but sun, wind and continued drizzle can change prints quickly. A track protected beneath grass may look newer than one made at the same time in open mud.

Tracks become much more useful when combined with location and behavior. Deer prints running along a fence may lead to a crossing. Raccoon tracks around a creek make sense. Hogs often leave rooting, wallows and mud on nearby vegetation. Texas Parks and Wildlife encourages hunters to read sign as a collection of trails, tracks, droppings, rubs, scrapes and feeding evidence rather than relying on a single mark.

Take a photograph straight down with a ruler, knife or other known-size object beside the track if you want to identify it later. Do not put the object on top of the print. A series of photos showing the trail can be more useful than one close-up.

Rain does not make wildlife more active. It just leaves a clearer record of what already moved overnight. The ranch was busy all night. The mud finally kept the record.

Stride and gait add another layer. Measure the distance between repeated prints and notice whether the animal walked, trotted or bounded. A coyote moving down a road may place the hind foot close to the front print, creating a tidy trail. Raccoons often leave paired patterns because of the way front and hind feet land.

Substrate can distort almost everything. A hoof sinks and spreads in deep mud. A track in sand may look larger after the edges crumble.

Rain can enlarge old prints until they appear to belong to a much bigger animal. The best identification comes from the cleanest section of trail, not the biggest print.

For families, track reading is an easy outdoor activity because it requires almost no equipment. A phone camera, ruler and small notebook are enough.

Revisit the same creek crossing after different weather and a surprisingly complete picture of local wildlife begins to form.

DAVIS ELECTRIC CO.

Solar Energy Solutions

- Solid Investment
- Hedge Rising Energy Cost
- Very Low Maintenance
- 25 Year Warranty
- $0 Down Options Available



START SAVING
Get a Quote Today 940-763-1177

Enderby GAS, Inc

1405 US 82, Gainesville • 940-665-3457
N. Hwy 59, Bowie • 940-872-2572



"Whatever your reason – We have propane for every season"

JUSTIN DISCOUNT BOOTS

AND COWBOY OUTFITTERS

WORLD'S LARGEST WESTERN WEAR OUTLET STORE

MONDAY–SATURDAY | 9AM-6PM

BEST PRICES AROUND

For the BEST prices around on these GREAT brands & more... Visit our 3 stores in Justin!!!

You can also find us online at:
www.justindiscountboots.com
or visit us on Facebook & Instagram



101 N. HWY 156
JUSTIN, TX 76247

TWISTED X · ANDERSON BEAN · Thoroughbred Since 1892 · ROPER · .R · Justin · Tony Lama · FR Wrangler · Wrangler · ARIAT · HP TOP HAND COLLECTION

★ 3 STORES. ONE GREAT DESTINATION.
Come see the difference!

AG elsewhere MONTANA

PHOTO | DESCRIPTION BY LINDSEY MONK



Captured last November at the Hat Ranch in Kaycee, Wyoming, cowboys head out to gather cattle and move the calves toward the corrals in preparation for shipping.

How old is that buck?

By Ann Asher

A heavy-racked buck steps into a sendero and the first question is often, 'How old is he?' Hunters have spent generations trying to answer from a few seconds of observation or a trail-camera photograph.

The first rule is to stop counting points. Antler size is influenced by age, nutrition and genetics, and individual variation is enormous. A young buck can carry impressive antlers, and a mature buck can be relatively modest. Texas Parks and Wildlife notes that body and antler size are not necessarily reliable age indicators by themselves.

Body characteristics become more useful when several are considered together. A 1 1/2-year-old buck often looks leggy and narrow, almost like a doe with antlers. The neck is slim, the belly tight and the chest relatively shallow.

At 2 1/2, the body thickens but the legs still look long. The neck begins to gain size during the rut, yet the shoulders and chest do not have the heavy look of a mature buck.

A 3 1/2-year-old often has the athletic appearance hunters describe as a racehorse or thoroughbred. Muscle is more obvious through the shoulders and hindquarters, the chest is deeper and the belly is still tight.

At 4 1/2, the buck is physically mature. The neck swells heavily during the breeding season and begins to blend into the shoulders.

The chest looks deep, the belly may show a slight sag and the legs no longer look overly long for the body.

Bucks 5 1/2 and older may show a thick neck, heavy shoulders, sagging belly and a less straight back. Very old bucks can

Continue on page 51



A buck's antlers attract attention, but body proportions are often more useful than rack size when estimating age in the field. (Courtesy photo)

Continued from page 49

actually begin losing body mass and may look less impressive than they did at their peak.

Season complicates all of those clues. During the rut, necks swell and mature bucks may lose weight. Camera angle changes proportions. A deer standing downhill can look short-legged and heavy.

Nutrition and regional body size also matter, which is why local experience improves estimates.

After harvest, tooth replacement and wear can provide another age estimate. Cementum annuli, a laboratory technique that examines annual layers in tooth roots, can be more precise, although even aging methods have limitations.

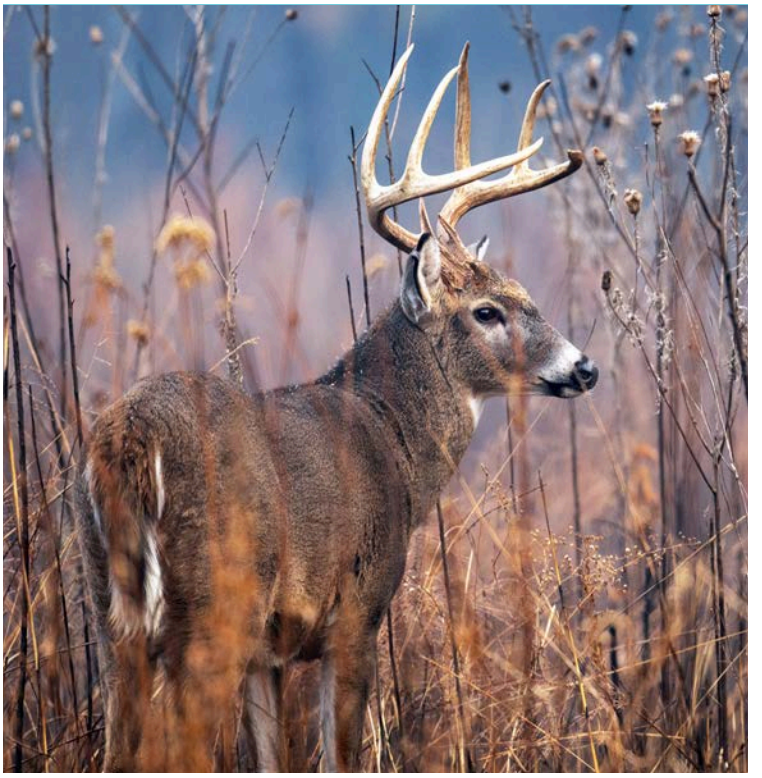
For most practical management decisions, the goal is not to identify whether a buck is exactly 4 1/2 or 5 1/2 years old from 150 yards away. It is to distinguish an immature animal from a mature one with reasonable confidence.

Look past the rack. Study the chest, belly, back, neck and the apparent length of the legs relative to the body. Antlers are why many hunters notice the buck. The rest of him is what helps tell his age.

Trail-camera photographs are most useful when the buck is broadside and relaxed. Head-on photos exaggerate the chest and hide the belly line, while a deer stretching toward a feeder can look longer and leaner. Compare multiple photographs rather than aging from one dramatic image.

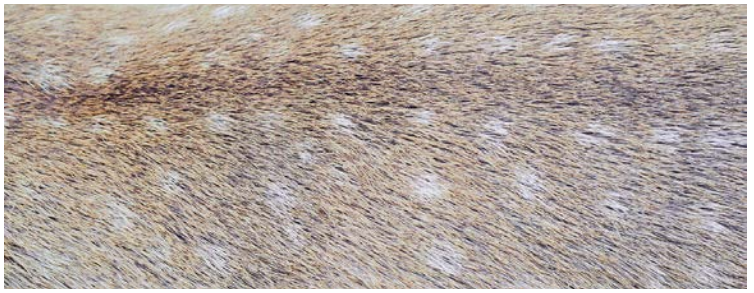
Jaw aging after harvest deserves the same humility. Tooth replacement is quite useful in young deer, but wear becomes more subjective as deer age.

Soil type and diet influence



Chest depth, neck thickness, body condition and posture can help hunters place a buck in a general age class.





abrasion. Cementum annuli can improve precision, yet laboratory estimates are not perfect either.

For hunters who use age-based harvest goals, consistency matters more than pretending to know an exact birthday.

Decide before the season what 'mature' means for the property, learn the local body characteristics and apply the same standard when a buck appears quickly.

Nutrition, genetics and geography complicate the picture. A well-fed young buck can carry impressive antlers, while an older buck in poor habitat may not.

That is why wildlife biologists caution against using antler points or spread as a birthday calendar.

Body characteristics usually offer a better field estimate, especially when several traits are considered together.

Even then, aging a live deer is an estimate. Camera angle, posture and the rut can change how a buck carries his body.

The goal should be to place a deer in a reasonable age class, not pretend that one photograph can reveal an exact birth year.

Express Scale Services
Specializing in Livestock and Truck Scales
Full Service Scale Company Serving the Agriculture Industry.
Single animal scale for a wide range of livestock. Call now for more information.
Phone: 806-655-3033
325-554-7434
Cell: 806-683-4613
Fax: 806-655-7091
steve@expressscale.com
www.expressscale.com
Legal for Trade •
Mobile and Stationary Scales •
Durable Construction •
12 ft. - 22 ft. length available •

DENNIS' FARM STORE
SEED AND FEED
CHEMICALS
ANIMAL HEALTH
FARM SUPPLIES
~ Dennis Smith
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
From Our Ranch to Yours
QUALITY PRODUCTS.
LOCAL SERVICE.
PRICES THAT WORK FOR YOU!
FEED & HAY | OUTDOOR DECOR | ANIMAL HEALTH | WESTERN GIFTS | LAWN & GARDEN | PET SUPPLIES | HARDWARE & MORE
DENNIS' FARM STORE
1201 N. ELM ST. | DENTON, TX 76201
940-382-1235
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!
HOURS:
MONDAY – FRIDAY 8:00 AM – 5:30 PM
SATURDAY 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM
SUNDAY CLOSED
Thank You
FOR SUPPORTING YOUR LOCAL FARM STORE!
FAMILY OWNED & OPERATED

The GARDEN GUY

By Norman Winter | Horticulturist, Author, Speaker

Lacebark Elm, Stunning in the winter landscape

This time of the year I get mesmerized with trees such as the lacebark elm whose splendor comes not only from the fall leaf color but the incredible beauty of its bark. These are traits that seem to go unnoticed or at least unappreciated while the trees are full of green leaves.

The lacebark elm is known botanically as Ulmus parvifolia and is from China and Korea. Lest you think badly about bringing in foreign substitutes know that this one is resistant to Dutch elm disease that wreaked havoc on our native, American elm. To be honest this is one of the most problem free trees for the landscape. It is also a manageable size, reaching 50 feet tall and as wide over time.

I have years of growing them and while they are not as showy as some of the hybrid red maples, they offer good color in shades of red, combined with pink and yellow. As the leaves fell they created a carpet of yellow worthy of capturing with the camera. Now that the leaves are almost all off, the lacebark is the showiest as you'll see below.

After a dozen years ours are about 20 feet tall and 18 feet wide offering a perfect size for the urban environment. The leaves are dark green and handsome during the summer leading up to the fall display.



The Lacebark Elm is one of the most dependable trees for fall color in Texas & Oklahoma. (Photos courtesy of Norman Winter, the Garden Guy)

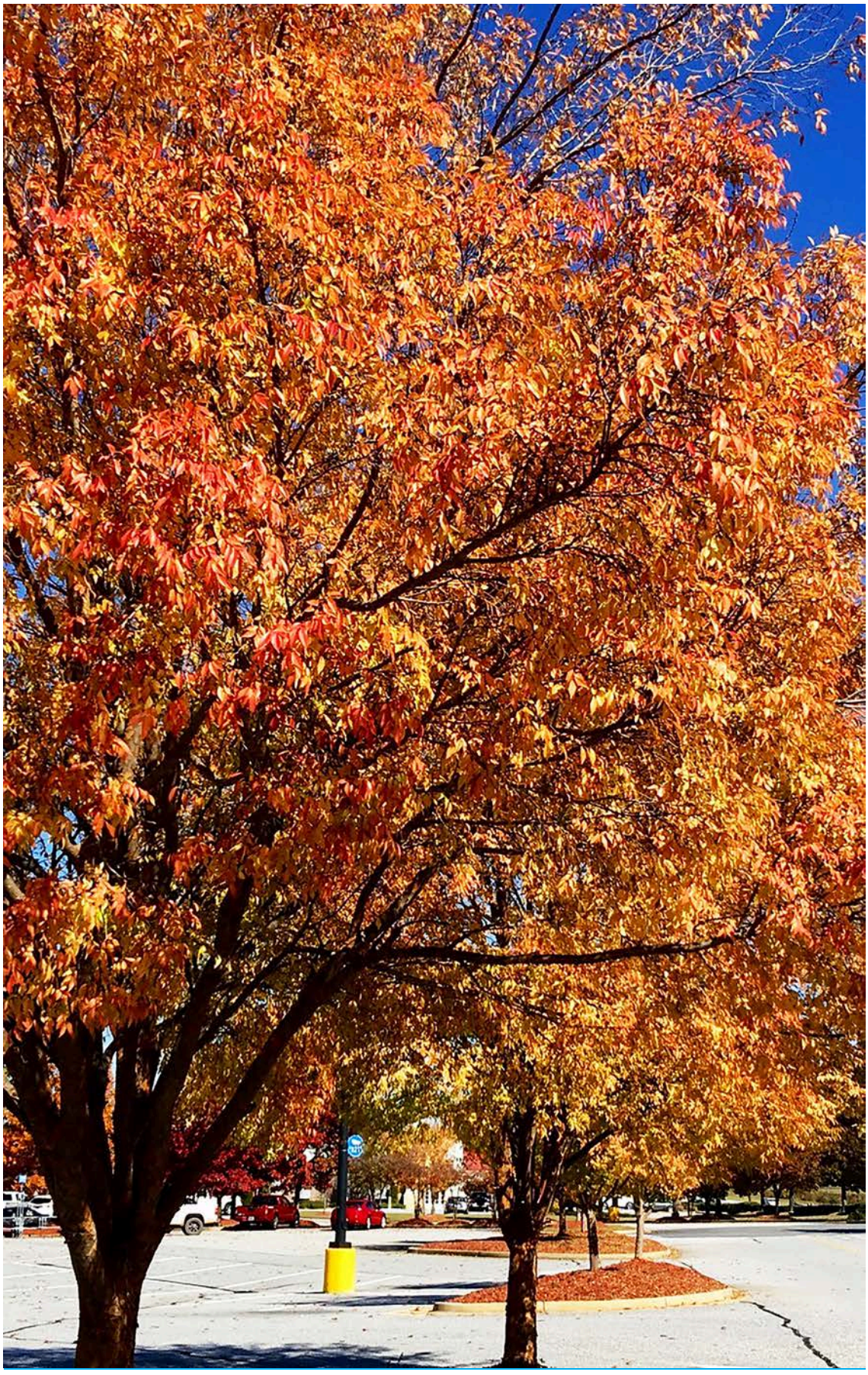
Some trials report that the color on this species is better in the south but certainly this is not a deterrent in its colder zone 5 or protected zone 4 regions.

Don't forget the other incredible attribute, its bark. This is where it beats the hybrid red maples. While it's called lacebark which is most appropriate, it would also make the perfect pattern for a camouflage outfit. The bark exfoliates revealing shades of orange, brown, gray and olive green. Not too many trees can match this one in color and design.

In the south the Drake is among the most popular varieties as it is considered semi-evergreen. This would be problematic for the north as it is considered cold hardy to zone 7. Northern suppliers instead choose Emerald Isle and Emerald Vase in addition to a new release called Burgundy.

Once you select the variety for your region choose a site with plenty of sun. The soil should be fertile and well-drained. They are not picky about soil pH which is great for everyone. Even though they are quick to acclimate dig you planting hole two to three times as wide as the root ball. This really allows for the quickest root-expansion into the adjacent soil. The lacebark is considered a fast grower for a really quality tree. Normally fast growing is in connection with inferior short lived trees.

The dormant season reveals whether or not we planned for form and structure in our gardens and the use of bark is important. If we choose the right trees like the lacebark elm we will realize that even though they are deciduous they will make a dramatic landscape impact in late fall and winter once leaves have fallen and the bark is exposed. As spring planting season rolls around give the lacebark strong consideration for your landscape.



The Lacebark Elm is resistant to Dutch Elm disease, drought tolerant and is not finicky about soil pH.

SERVICES

CALL 940-872-5922 TO PLACE YOURS

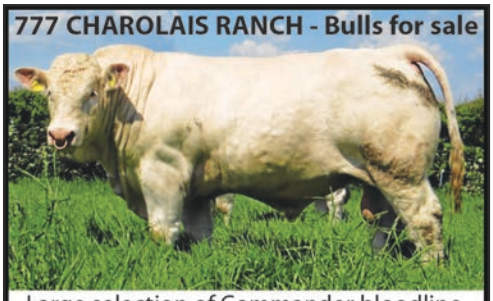


LOOKING FOR FACTORY 1/2, 3/4 OR 1T
pickup beds, new or used, will pickup

800-440-0721

www.fstruckparts.com

777 CHAROLAIS RANCH - Bulls for sale



Large selection of Commander bloodline.
Also large round hay bales for sale.
Call Jim Lemons **580-276-8052** or
Bud Lemons **580-276-7534**.

BANDIT RECYCLING LLC

WE BUY ALL METALS!

2413 N Hwy 59
Bowie, TX 76230

Office: 940-872-3712
banditrecycling@yahoo.com
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

M&M Trailer Service, LLC

Authorized dealer for Shelby Trailer Flooring

SHELBY TM SUS TRAILER FLOORING

- Alternative to Wood!
- Standing X-Lug Cleated Pattern
- Custom Cut to Length
- Will NEVER Rot
- 100% Recycled Material

These boards completely replace a wood floor.
We also offer tongue and groove & flat boards

580-658-6510

166494 Heffington Rd., Marlow, OK

MID-VALLEY HORSESHOEING, INC.

HOT, COLD & CORRECTIVE

ERIC BROWN

Veterinarian References
Available on Request



Shoeing, Trimming & Plating
Prompt, Reliable Services

817-690-0924

BUDGET

SEPTIC SYSTEMS INC.
Reynolds Family Business
Roy, Cindy & Reyn

QUALITY BUILT IN TEXAS
ALL OF NORTH TEXAS

940-247-2526 (office)
817-366-7990 (cell)
817-489-2772 (fax)

lenroydonbuilders@gmail.com
www.lrbuild.com



Rattlesnake University

PROTECT. TRAIN. LOVE.

We specialize in training dogs detect and avoid venomous snakes, ensuring the safety of your pets and family.



SNAKE DETECTION
We train dogs to detect and avoid venomous snakes.

EXPERT TRAINING
Customized training for maximum safety and effectiveness.

FAMILY PROTECTION
Peace of mind knowing your pets and loved ones are protected.

Contact
ELOISA ALCAIDA
520-831-0459

15 YEARS VET TECH EXPERIENCE

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS MOST

SCHAD SERVICES



- Fencing
- Skid Steer
- Post Driving
- Rock Drilling
- Welding
- Custom Entryways

Foundation Pier Drilling

940-284-4690

RAY Mataska ROOFING

ALL TYPES

Roofing & Repairs • FREE Estimates

940.733.8809

"GO DIGITAL. STAY CONNECTED. SUBSCRIBE IN SECONDS."

No printing delays, no distribution headaches—just instant access

WWW.NTFRONLINE.COM | CALL 940-872-5922

CLASSIFIEDS

CALL 940-872-5922 TO PLACE YOURS

EMPOYMENT

JOB OPPORTUNITY: RANCH HAND WANTED - We are looking for a self-motivated, hardworking ranch hand to join our team! If you are a self-starter with a strong work ethic, capable of working both independently and as part of a team, we want to hear from you. We are located in Decatur, Texas. Key Responsibilities: Working with cattle and horses, Operating farm equipment, Assisting with seasonal guided rifle hunts, Providing guidance on gun safety and wildlife knowledge, Contributing to the smooth running of the ranch. Qualifications: Experience with cattle, horses, and farming equipment, Strong people skills and ability to work well with others, Knowledge of gun safety and wildlife, with experience in guiding hunts, and a genuine love for ranching and the ranch lifestyle. If you are passionate about ranching and enjoy working in a dynamic, outdoor environment, we encourage you to apply! Contact us: Waggoner & Sauder/Nine Bar Ranch, JimBob Little, **940-393-5853**, Jimbob@ninebarranch.com. Serious applicants only. cts



HUGE SELECTION OF CATTLE EQUIPMENT AND HAY TRAILERS – GoBob is the Largest Independent Cattle Equipement Dealer in America with top brands like: Arrowquip, Pearson, Cowco, Lakeside, Cattle Flow and Red Rhino. CALL TODAY! **1-844-284-4208** or check us out online at GoBobRanch.com .

LIVESTOCK



REAL ESTATE

MONTAGUE COUNTY-10.71 +/- acre tract on the west end of Ringgold. $150,000. Call Scotty Crowley, **940-733-2149**. Lone Star Realty, www.LoneStar-Realty.com pb

---

ESTATE BUY OUT-quick cash for real estate antiques, equipment and livestock. We pay closing costs. Call Josh 940-841-0180 or Sue Swint **940-841-2328**. tfc

SERVICES

MID-VALLEY HORSESHOEING, INC-Hot, cold and corrective, Eric Brown, veterinarian references available on request. Showing, trimming and plating. Prompt, reliable services. **817-690-0924**.

WE BUY USED WINDMILLS-in any condition. We also have new and used parts available. Give us a call, **940-894-3172**. pd



AL SALINAS FENCING-all types of fencing, braces, gates, cattle guards, livestock shelters, carports, pre-made braces, Apollo Gate Openers. **940-577-0878**. alsalinasfencing.com. cts



BUYING-horses, ponies, sheep, cattle, goats, all classes of livestock, flatbeds and semi trailers. Also guns. Call or text **940-224-1470**. Pay cash.





Chalking It Up to the Hawk

By Jelly McClellan

Patiently waiting amongst the trees as rain falls delicately on its feathers. At a swift chance, the hawk dives off the tips of the trees to embark on a journey to find an evening food source.

I watched this hawk sigh at the feeling of rain, bathe itself, and bask in the calm drizzle of the missing piece we've been hoping for all summer.

A COMPLETE LINE OF QUALITY FEEDS
YOU CAN DEPEND ON



Find a dealer near you, **www.bryantgrain.com**

NORTH TEXAS COUNTY DEALERS

ARCHER
Holliday Feed

CLAY
4-Corners Grocery & Station

COOKE
Smith Feed Store

DENTON
Krum Farm & Feed Supply
Ponder Feed
Johnson Feed - Lewisville
Pilot Point Feed

JACK
H Brand Feed

MONTAGUE
Berend Brothers
Saint Jo Farm & Ranch

PARKER
Aledo Feed & Supply
Horseman's Supply
Pilgrim Farm & Ranch
Rhodes & Sons Hay & Feed
NRS-Springtown
Teskey's

TARRANT
Alejandro Feed Store
Meza & Sons
Jimenez Western Wear
Discount Feed & More
Handley Feed Store
Crossroads Drive-In
Red Barn Feed
Turkey Mountain
Marshall Grain

WICHITA
Berend Brothers
The Feed & Garden Store

WISE
NRS-Decatur
NRS-Bridgeport

YOUNG
J&N Feed & Seed
Berend Brothers

ZINPRO PERFORMANCE MINERALS® · TECHNOLOGY FEED Diamond V · Tasco

Bryant Grain Company, Inc.

300 N Front St. • Aledo, TX 76008 • 800-441-9782 • info@bryantgrain.com

"GO DIGITAL. STAY CONNECTED. SUBSCRIBE IN SECONDS."

No printing delays, no distribution headaches—just instant access



Visit: www.ntfronline.com today to sign up for FREE