



Bucking the Trend

First-generation Hereford breeder Cameron Mulrony and his wife, LeAnne, are using their experience on the rodeo circuit to make a go of the Hereford business.



Cameron Mulrony has more than a decade of experience of staying atop some of the rankest bulls around. But when it came time to begin his own cattle herd, the docility of the Hereford breed drew him in.

Not that long ago, Cameron Mulrony, The Dalles, Ore., could be found climbing into the chutes at Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association (PRCA) and Professional Bull Riders (PBR) events from coast to coast.

His goal? To hit the eight-second buzzer atop some of the toughest bulls around.

But when he and LeAnne decided to begin their own cattle herd, he knew a calm disposition was essential. This, in addition to marketability and feed efficiency, is what led them to the Hereford breed nearly a decade ago.

Mulrony says this decision to raise Herefords has led to great returns. And it's helped them to follow their dreams in the horse industry, too.

Always a cowboy

Mulrony was raised in Washington, where his dad was a diesel mechanic and rode bucking horses and bulls on the side, and his mom worked as a dental hygienist.

"We lived in the country, surrounded by fields — and my brother and sister and I always knew we wanted to be rodeo cowboys," he says.

A neighbor, Dick Tetric, ran Hereford cattle on the stubble near the Mulrony home, and the Mulrony children began helping with feeding and chores.

"Dick always said, 'There's nothing prettier than red and white Hereford cattle on green grass,'" Mulrony recalls.

Dick's father, Glen, raised horses, as well. And through their experiences with these neighbors Mulrony and his siblings got their start with horses and cattle.

Mulrony began his career in bull riding and bareback riding in his youth and qualified for the National High School Finals Rodeo. He attended the University of Idaho, where he was a four-time national finalist in bull riding and graduated in 2003 with a major in agricultural education and a minor in range management.

Upon graduation, Mulrony rode bulls through the PRCA and PBR for 10 years, even after he began teaching agriculture at Dufur High School in 2005.

He and LeAnne were married in 2004. And they now have two children: son, Mannie, 6, and daughter, Collins, 4.

Mulrony says he always knew he wanted to raise cattle of his own someday. And he and LeAnne took that leap only after careful consideration and planning.

Taking the leap

As Mulrony worked his way through college, he would help ranchers gather cattle and complete day-to-day chores.



Cameron and LeAnne Mulrony are first-generation Hereford breeders in The Dalles, Ore. They chose Hereford cattle for their marketability, and for the docility of working cattle with their young children: son, Mannie, and daughter, Collins.

"When I was trying to make a living rodeoing, I got to see a lot of different operations," he says. "I worked cows in Texas, where there were eight cows per section. And I worked cows in Hawaii, where there are four cows per acre."

Once he and LeAnne were established in Oregon, they asked her dad about running a few cows on some of his unused hillside pasture. When he agreed, it was time to determine the type of cattle to run.

"My Uncle Gilbert Hintz always said, 'You have to find a market and produce for it,'" Mulrony says. "If you have a product and try to market it, you'll have a much tougher road. And Dick had always said you don't have to market a black baldie calf because it will market itself. That's how we decided on Herefords."

The Hereford disposition was another major factor in choosing the breed.

"Back when I helped other ranchers, there were some cattle that were like gathering elk — they ran from one end of the pasture to the other," Mulrony says. "Some Angus bulls I'd worked with — well, I always had to watch my back. They were almost worse than some of the bucking bulls I had been

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around. At least with the bucking bulls, you could usually pet them in the pens behind the chutes at the rodeo.”

Feed efficiency was also huge. “I knew if I could put less money into feed, that could help us be more profitable,” Mulrony says. “My grandpa Helmut Hintz always said you make money when you buy and not when you sell.”

Mulrony and LeAnne sought out the best quality cows that would fit within their budget, and in 2006 they purchased 10 Hereford cow-calf pairs from BB Cattle Co. in Connell, Wash.

“When you don’t have a large number of cattle, you need to raise cattle that will bring a premium,” he says. “We saved every heifer and sold the bulls back to one of our neighbors. And gradually, we’ve built our herd to what it is today — about 30 head.”

Mulrony says he selects for soundness, structure and consistency.



The Mulronys hope to pass down their Hereford cattle business to their children in the future.



The Mulronys began their Hereford cattle operation with 10 cow-calf pairs in 2006. Through the years, they have built their herd to more than 30 head.

“We want to produce high-producing and functional cattle for our area,” he says. “Environments and conditions are different in different parts of the country. I want to produce cows that will work for the cattlemen in our area. We continue to run them like commercial cattle, going from stubble to grass to mountains and back to grass. Our goal is to raise them honestly, and be honest about what they are.”

Feet and legs are critical in the conditions his cattle endure, Mulrony adds.

“If their hocks are too straight, they won’t last in our area,” he says. “The same cow could last 10 years in Nebraska or Oklahoma — no problem. But when they get onto the hillsides, if they’re too straight in the hocks, they’ll break.”

The Mulronys planned to give the cattle project five years to be profitable.

“Our personal philosophy is that you have to work at something for five years before you cut your losses or continue with a program,” he explains. “And after five years, we knew we had made a great decision with Hereford cattle.”

Not only have the cattle been a successful venture, in their own right, but they’ve also helped the Mulronys expand their horse business, too.

Best cattle for Best Advice

LeAnne — a lifetime barrel racer — has always dreamed of breeding their own horses. And for the Mulronys, horses aren’t just a hobby. They’re essential for day-to-day work, too.

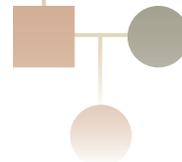
“We’ve always used horses to work cattle,” he says. “Around here, your horse isn’t any good if you can’t outrun a cow.”

As their cattle business grew, the Mulronys decided to follow that passion and venture into horse breeding.

“We had our cows paid off, and my wife wanted to breed our horses. And she always wants the best,” he says with a smile. “To breed to a stud, it’s a



The profitability of their Hereford cattle herd helped the Mulronys attain financing to purchase their Quarter Horse stud, Best Advice.



\$4,000 to \$5,000 stud fee, plus mare care. You have \$7,500 in it, and the colt hasn't even hit the ground. We decided if we were going to breed our horses, we needed to own the stud."

After about a year of searching the country for the right stud, they located him — Best Advice, then owned by Chad Hart in Louisiana.

"The problem was, you can't really finance a horse," Mulrony explains. "When you go to a lender, they see a horse as a hobby, and the market is hard to determine. If you base the value of a horse on the U.S. Department of Agriculture market report, they're all worth about \$300."

So the Mulronys refinanced a loan, using their Hereford cattle as collateral to purchase Best Advice.

"Those cows had paid for themselves, and now they've paid for our stud," he says.

The first colt crop by Best Advice will sell this fall, and the Mulronys are excited about their future with him.

"He's proving to be a wise investment and will help lead us to our goal of making a living raising cattle and horses," he says.

And they hope to continue that trend of success, in both the Hereford and horse industries, for generations to come.

Focus on the future

Their daughter, Collins, loves being horseback with Mom and Dad. Their son, Mannie, is showing a passion for both the cattle and the horses.

"Mannie wants to gather the cattle on horseback by himself, and if there's a time when it just doesn't work for him to help, well, he gets a little upset," Mulrony says with a smile.

Joe Bennett, BB Cattle Co., says Mulrony's approach to the Hereford industry is likely an indication of his continued success.

"He started with some pretty nice cows and, using some artificial insemination (AI) bulls, built from there," Bennett says. "He has a lot of passion for the Hereford breed and a determination to succeed. I would suspect as his kids grow and begin showing in junior shows, that determination will continue to grow."

And if all goes as planned, Mulrony says, he and LeAnne hope to leave the Hereford operation in the hands of their children someday.

"They each have one cow — full sisters — and they'll be able to raise and sell their calves to get their start in the cattle business," Mulrony says. "As first-generation Hereford breeders, our goal is to make something for the next generation to start with, if they choose to continue in the program. We



Son, Mannie, enjoys working cattle with his parents on their ranch in Oregon.

won't force them to like it. But I won't lie. I might be a little disappointed if they don't."

Advice to others

Mulrony says, regardless of the situation, new ventures — such as theirs in the Hereford business — take time.

"Make a plan and stick with it," he says. "So often, I see people try something new, and (if it)

doesn't work out in the first shot, they just quit and give up. We've had some setbacks. But we're now at the point that the cows pay for themselves — and now we're working toward the point where they may pay all of our bills, someday."

He also advises those new to the business to seek the advice of others with experience.

"Look at other respected programs, and make your own," Mulrony says. "Don't try to copy, but use their input and ideas to mold your own program. Go to the top and see what's working. Then you'll know where to go."

When it comes to cattle upon which to build a herd and a legacy for generations to come, the Mulronys knew only one breed would do — Hereford. And, based on the success they've seen thus far, it's safe to say they're in for much longer than an eight-second ride. **HW**

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