

Generations

John and Beverly Bryan and their family continue a tradition of raising registered Herefords in south central Idaho.

by ***Maggie J. Malson***

Between Bliss and Gooding, in south central Idaho, sits JBB/AL Herefords, a family-owned, third-generation Hereford ranch. As I sat down with John and Beverly Bryan, their daughter, Dawn, and her husband, James Anderson, I was reminded of this great cattle industry and the people who get up every day to care for their stock and their land, donate their time to help others in need and provide food and fiber to the rest of the world. It was a pleasure to visit with this genuine and humble family, who are representative of the many ranching families across our great nation.

Both John's maternal and paternal grandparents moved to Idaho from Kansas. They settled in the area, farming and ranching. His Mom's dad started raising Herefords.

"Herefords were king back then," John says. "There was no question that was the breed of choice."

John had been raised around cattle all his life, and he was deeply rooted in the industry. When he and Beverly married in 1962, he had 15 cows to start his own herd. In 1967 they started raising registered Herefords and moved to their present-day ranch in 1969. He had a loyalty to the breed his family raised but continued breeding them for the positive traits they offered the industry.

"Herefords are good gainers, have good dispositions and are excellent mother cows," he says. "About 95% of our customers put our Hereford bulls on a predominantly black cow herd. They really want the hybrid vigor the Hereford breed offers."

Beverly says, "We knew we weren't going to be a large operation. So, we chose quality over quantity. We wanted to raise good cattle.

"When we started, it was before EPDs (expected progeny differences)," she adds. "Once we began performance testing, we realized that if those old favorite cows weren't doing their job, they had to go to town."

The Bryans' son, Shawn, and daughter, Dawn, both grew up helping their parents farm and raise cattle. They spent many summers swathing hay and showing Herefords in 4-H, FFA and the Idaho Junior Hereford Association (IJHA). Now, Shawn is a building contractor and lives with his wife and children in a house he built on the ranch. Dawn and James Anderson also live on the ranch. Their children, 19-year-old son, Bryan, and 14-year-old daughter, Jae, are the fourth generation to help raise Herefords. They are following in their mother's footsteps, showing cattle and holding leadership positions in the IJHA.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BRYAN FAMILY

The entire family gathered together. Back row (l to r) are: Dawn and James Anderson, John Bryan, Bryan Anderson, Shawn and Stacy Bryan. Seated are Beverly Bryan and her mother, Lavella Slatter. Front row (l to r) are: Jae Anderson, Cassy Bryan and Mike Bryan.



John Bryan, left, visits with Willard Wolf, as Mark Holt, American Hereford Association western region field representative, checks out the 2011 Hereford bull offering at the Cattleman's Connection sale in March.



The Bryans offer commercial cattlemen range-ready bulls like this each March in the Cattleman's Connection Sale.

Beverly's mother also lives near them, making it four generations who live on the family ranch.

In 1992 the Bryans formed a partnership with Dawn and James, who had Anderson Livestock.

"Dawn was my mother's only granddaughter, so Mom gave her the family brand—an open A L," John says. "We joked that when she married, her husband should have a last name that started with A. Well, it worked out that way. We just combined the two in our partnership and became JBB/AL Herefords."

James' family came from the grocery industry, and he was working in the meat department at Safeway in Gooding when he and Dawn met.

"It's nice to have that industry background," James says. "I think it helps us remain in touch with the ultimate consumer of our product. We raise bulls for commercial cattlemen, but we have to keep focused on the quality of the meat the consumer wants to purchase. All of our genetic decisions are based on that."

In fact, the meat counter is the first place John and James go when they enter a grocery store. Beverly jokes it's the only place in the store John can locate.

Last September, the family participated in an event at Ridley's Family Markets in Jerome sponsored by the Idaho Beef Council. Ridley's has grocery stores in Idaho, Utah, Nevada and Wyoming and offers Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®).

"We took a 2½-year-old herd sire and two of his bull calves down there," John says. "Customers could guess how much they weighed, and the winner would receive \$400 of beef."

"It was a great promotion," says Beverly. "We had the chance to meet a lot of consumers and listen to their thoughts and ideas on beef. The event drew a lot of attention. We were also able to talk about our operation and the positive things we are doing to raise beef."

The Bryans have always raised range-ready bulls for commercial cattlemen, selling in 29 bull sales. They sold for 15 years at the Gooding Livestock Market before it closed, then held an annual sale at their own ranch. Now, they market their cattle in March with Spring Cove Angus Ranch at the Cattleman's Connection Sale. In addition, they have started offering locker beef to area neighbors.

"We had one gentleman call and want to come see our place before he purchased any beef," Beverly says. "People want to know the animals are being raised in a clean environment and are treated properly. It's just a sign of the times. We all need to be telling our story of how we treat our animals humanely and raise a healthy food supply."

For the love of...

"You have to love it to stay in it," Beverly says about the cattle industry. "There used to be so

many Hereford breeders. It seems like there was one under every rock, but there are a lot fewer now."

Dawn adds, "Everyone wants to be in it when things are going well, but not everyone has the fortitude to stick with it when times are lean."

The Hereford breed and cattle industry, in general, have gone through many changes in the last 30 years, including type and kind.

"We had a gentleman tell us once that you can follow the trends a little bit, but you want to stay in the middle of the road," Beverly says. "You don't want to breed them too small or too big or chase fads. We've tried to always breed our cattle with that mentality."

John adds, "Our philosophy has always been to have good, usable cattle that go out on the range and work. We want the cows to come back bred with a heavy calf following behind."

JBB/AL calves in the spring and fall and has found its fall

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bulls to be the favorites of the commercial buyers.

"They have some more growth to them but are still young enough to get some extra years out of them too," John says. "We've seen a change in the industry where people are wanting to buy Hereford yearling bulls. It used to be they would only buy 2-year-olds, but now they see the value in the calves and have figured out how to manage them. It's nice to sell them as yearlings and not have as much feed costs into them."

The cows are time bred AI (artificial insemination) for 30 days, then turned out with the bulls. James and Bryan do the AI work.

"We mate the bulls and cows based on the different traits each one offers that will help the other out," James says. "Selecting and mating the cattle is my favorite part of the business. I like being able to see the end result in the set of calves we get."

John says his favorite part of raising cattle is quite simply—buckarooing. In fact, a recent

anniversary gift from his wife was a 2-year-old gelding.

"If Dad could get on a horse at daybreak and not get off until sundown, he'd be a happy man," Dawn added.

Dawn is usually the one in charge of breaking the calves to show and helping get them ready on show day. The family has attended the Western Nugget National Show & Sale in Reno for the past 20 years, whether it's been to show or sell cattle or just to watch.

"It's our family vacation," Dawn says with a smile. "We take animals to exhibit, plus it's a chance to visit with breeders and see a lot of cattle. And it's a lot of fun too."

As a district manager for the Department of Correction, Dawn deals with people in a negative environment.

"I love being outside and working with the cattle," she adds. "It's so different from my day-to-day work and is a nice break from all the negativity that comes with that line of work."

Beverly loves the lifestyle. "When we got married, I decided I could either learn to like it or be miserable," she says. "My dad farmed, but I didn't grow up around cattle ranching. Before James came along, I helped with all the clipping and getting the cattle ready for shows and sales.

"I also really like how the industry has created new cuts of beef to market and helped consumers learn how to use them," she adds.

"The lifestyle is something that appealed to us, too," Dawn says. "Growing up in it, I had to learn responsibility and work ethic. We've tried to pass that on to our kids. As 'ranch kids,' they really get to practice those skills."

In fact, Bryan and Jae do their fair share of chores and work to help the family operation. Bryan splits his time among attending class at College of Southern Idaho (CSI), helping his family with the cattle, and swathing and baling hay for an area custom hay operation. When not in school or

Idaho beef industry unites against hunger

When the Idaho cattle industry realized a need, its members stepped up and decided to "meat" it. Learning that the Idaho Foodbank distributes food to an average of 116,000 hungry Idaho children, families and seniors each month and that the need is especially great for sources of protein, like beef, the Idaho Cattle Association (ICA) united with the Idaho CattleWomen, Idaho Beef Council, Agri Beef Co. and the Idaho Foodbank to launch the program Beef Counts — Idaho's beef industry united against hunger.

"We just felt this was the right thing to do," says John Bryan, JBB/AL Herefords, Gooding, Idaho, who served on the ICA board of directors during the planning stages and launching of the program in 2010. After weaning last summer, the Bryans' family ranching operation donated a heifer calf to Beef Counts.

Cattlemen throughout the state can donate a calf, or the cash equivalent, for beef to be distributed by the Idaho Foodbank. A single donated animal will provide approximately 1,600 servings of high quality beef to hungry Idahoans. Additionally, Agri Beef Co., Boise, Idaho, will provide a 50% match for all contributions, increasing the amount of servings to almost 2,400 per animal.



"This program illustrates to society the compassion and social responsibility of cattle producers, which in turn has the potential to build consumer confidence in our product and production practices," says Wyatt Prescott, ICA executive vice president.

Since its inception, the program has raised \$90,000 dollars, including producer contributions and the match from Agri Beef Co., amounting to nearly 100,000 servings of wholesome, high-quality beef.

"Lean beef is an excellent source of not only protein, which the body needs for growth and maintenance of the body, but also vital minerals and nutrients like zinc and iron," says Jessyca Tyler, Idaho Foodbank nutrition services specialist. "High quality beef, like that donated through the Beef Counts program, helps us provide nutritious food to the clients we service at the Foodbank. This complete source of protein is essential for the normal, healthy functioning of every cell in the body."

Jenifer Johnson, Idaho Foodbank vice president of development, says this program provides a sustainable, consistent supply of high-quality beef to the Foodbank's community partners and networks.

playing sports, Jae helps, too, and has enjoyed participating on the marketing team for the IJHA and serving as a director.

Giving back

Having grown up in the IJHA, Dawn feels strongly about giving back to today's youth.

"Our future is in our youth," she says. "James and I, just as my parents, believe that if we don't foster the virtues of ethical, good works in our youth, we are doing nothing to support our community and, in this case, our industry. Cattle raise good kids, and, additionally, the kids have the opportunity to gain life and work skills along the way."

In addition, the family has been a member of the American and Idaho Hereford Associations, as well as Idaho Cattle Association (ICA) and National Cattlemen's Beef Association members for more than 30 years.

Last November, John finished his two-year term as Purebred Council Chairman for the ICA. "I enjoyed

getting to know the policies, people and process more while being on the ICA Board," John says. "The biggest issue the Purebred Council worked on was getting new regulations for trichomoniasis testing for cattle coming into Idaho," he says.

"There are a lot of things we can't do as an individual but we can as a group," Beverly says. "As a whole, the agriculture community needs to work together to better the entire industry and to share the positive things we do every day."

One large project the ICA was involved in while John was a board member was starting the Beef Counts program, which is a collaborative effort between industry and The Idaho Foodbank to provide wholesome, safe beef to hungry Idahoans. (see sidebar)

"We realized there was a great need for a protein source for people coming to the Foodbank," John says. "And we know beef is the best source out there. We think



Together James and Dawn Anderson and Beverly and John Bryan manage JBB/AL Herefords.

it's a great program to help our neighbors in need."

Driving away from JBB/AL Herefords that day after a tasty barbeque lunch, a tour of the ranch and some great conversation, I couldn't help but smile when I reflected on this long-standing family operation with a great love of Hereford cattle and a strong sense of giving back. **HW**

"The beef industry and Agri Beef Co., have always been big supporters of the Foodbank, and donations have come in as available," she says. "With this program, we have the ability to strategize and plan for events and distribution of beef throughout the year."

The face of hunger in Idaho and across the nation has changed in recent years. It's not just the homeless person living under an underpass or the person holding a cardboard sign at a freeway on-ramp.

"One in six Idahoans does not know where their next meal might come from," Johnson says. "We are seeing people who've been past donors to the Foodbank themselves, but due to losing employment or other circumstances, now turning to us to help with emergency food needs. They usually have exhausted all other resources."

As a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, the Idaho Foodbank is not subsidized by the government and relies on community contributions.

"We tried to make the donating process to Beef Counts really easy for cattle producers," Johnson says. "They can either donate a live animal through one of the participating auction facilities across the state or make a cash donation. Because of our nonprofit status, producers can make charitable tax contributions through the Idaho Foodbank."

Johnson says cattlemen not only offered many practical ideas for how to establish and run the program but also expressed care and concern for those in need.

"The passion and heart of cattle producers is so evident," Johnson says. "They don't want their neighbors going hungry. We are extremely proud to be associated with the Idaho beef industry. This has been a landmark initiative and the first one of its kind in the country. We are excited to see how we can use it as a template to not only help other foodbanks establish similar programs but also looking to getting other agriculture industries involved to meet the food needs of the population."

Prescott says the possibilities for growth of this program are endless.

"We want to see the program run itself and have producers plan on that contribution every year," Prescott says. "We have done the trailblazing for this program, and now it's up to the cattlemen to make it grow."

The program has already seen growth, as Washington used Idaho's template to form a similar program in its state.

"That's great," he adds. "We hope that it spreads to every state and we see national media coverage on the producer's compassion for their fellow man." **HW**