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May/June 2023



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 July 7th – Sale Day at Wagyu Sekai 3pm EST
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WAGYU WORLD

THIS ISSUE

May / June 2023

Volume 9, Number 4

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Bird's Hill Farm

It's all about family, superior Wagyu genetics and making the Bird's Hill Farm a destination for world class Wagyu genetics.

>> *By Heather Smith-Thomas*



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Clearwater Ridge

The ranch is named after their son Ridge and their favorite pasture on the Clearwater Ridge – here Les and Cindy Slater are developing a superior herd of black fullblood Wagyu.

>> *By Heather Smith-Thomas*



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*Courtesy of: Taken at Bird's Hill Farm by Meghan Black
Location: Canada*

30 OUT & ABOUT

The Passion For Prime sale was packed with top genetics and was well attended. The Howard family hosted a beautiful event the night before which set the tone for a very exciting event as a whole. The calendar continues to grow and change with exciting events throughout 2023 and going into 2024.



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Eden Valley Wagyu

The dream of Steve and Jamie Ries has become a reality; their blueprint to build a strong genetic base Wagyu herd has put them on the map as a source for high quality product. Their foundation is taking them to levels they never imagined it would go.

>> By Heather Smith-Thomas



52 HEALTH & HUSBANDRY

Horns

Dehorning now has many avenues in order to complete this management task; learn what's available and what may work best for your operation.

>> By Ronda Applegarth

3 OUTS

So, we have completed our second year in T-ball. This season started out with a T and then progressed into coach pitch games. These games were not scored nor were there outs until the end of the season. This painful but necessary experience for the kiddos to learn the game was beyond interesting at times and has truly been a journey for my son. Yes, when the experience of being thrown out at first base came, there was some crying on the bench along with many parents' explanations as to why it happened. There was also the pouting out on the field when the players ended up being in positions that they felt that they didn't want to be in and of course the few injuries that take place in baseball at this age; base runners running smack into the fielders, line drives to the body and the ever popular hurt feelings when there was a loose ball. By the last few games of the championship tournament, the kids knew why they needed to make three outs while out on the field and they

now understood the importance of getting across home plate. Personally, this process took a couple one-on-one convos with mom alone in the car to or from games and practices discussing the ins and outs of playing baseball and why we hustle, why we are down and ready while playing in the infield and why we pay attention to the game and don't watch the score board. In all, as a mother, watching my son grow this season has been the best experience and even though his team ended up in third place, he can't wait to play next season.



Mercedes Danekas-Lohse


Mercedes Danekas-Lohse - Editor

"Sometimes you just
have to take the leap,
and build your wings
on the way down."
~ Kobe Yamada ~

I have mentioned often in this column the number of calls that we receive from those interested in the breed and how to get involved. These calls range from individuals thinking about putting together F1 programs, to those who want are looking to establish full blood platforms. Many of these conversations become series of calls, as they become aquatinted with the breed and narrow down what it is they essentially need to start their Wagyu journeys. Mercedes always directs these new breeders to sources that can help them along the way.

For those folks taking the plunge into Wagyu it's important to have all of the tools they'll need to make the right decisions for the programs they hope to build. Indecision and second guessing are the mortal enemies of developing any new business, so it's important to have resources at hand to guide one through the many obstacles and questions that will arise. It's imperative for all of us to be fountains of knowledge for all the new breeders now entering the Wagyu breed.

Here in our part of California we are enjoying unheard of weather. Our day time highs are in the low 80's and our nights cool off into the 50's. We were checking out what the rest of the summer was going to do and for the moment it doesn't look like we will see much change, but I'll believe that when I see it. Have a great summer and remember if you want this breed to move forward take some time with the many new breeders entering the ranks.



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DISCOVERY

This Issue's Two Contributors Share Themselves With Us.



**HEATHER
SMITH-THOMAS**
Rancher/Writer



If I could turn back time, I'd...try to do a few things differently, knowing what I know now. The old saying: "Old too soon, smart too late" probably applies to all of us occasionally!

If there was one person I could say whatever I wanted to, I'd say..."I love you" to my mom, since I didn't get a chance to tell her that before she died.

As a mother, my greatest challenge and most cherished moment was...my greatest challenge was when my daughter was severely burned, 23 years ago this summer. She spent that summer fighting for her life in the burn ICU (at the Intermountain Burn Center in Salt Lake City) while family members took turns being with her to help monitor her condition since the nurses there were so short staffed---so many critical patients at that time. I stayed home and took care of her 2 1/2 year old daughter (who couldn't understand why mommy was gone) and the ranch--with a little help from friends and neighbors. My most cherished moment--that's harder to narrow down because there have been many: getting my first horse when I was a kid, getting to marry my own special "farm boy" and start our journey together ranching, the birth of my son, and daughter, and then the grandkids, welcoming my brave but physically fragile daughter home again after her summer in the burn ICU, being able to ride range with her again after she became strong enough a couple years later to be back on her horse, and then to ride with her and her kids to do our cattle work, being able to connect with special friends with whom we crossed paths on our unexpected detour in life as parents of a burn survivor--people who became lifelong friends in this shared journey. The list is longer than can be printed here but I am grateful for all of the moments that can be cherished forever.



**RONDA
APPLEGARTH**
Wagyu Breeder



If I could turn back time, I'd...have taken a little better care of myself and hugged my brother more. With that said, I've taken the opportunity to tell my loved ones how much I care about them these days.

If there was one person I could say whatever I wanted to, I'd say...I really don't feel like there is anyone I need to bite my tongue around.

As a mother, my greatest challenge and most cherished moment was...my greatest challenge was trying to provide everything I could for my children when I was young. My most cherished moments are watching my kids become people I respect and admire. They are excellent parents and providers.

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BIRD'S HILL *farm*

By Heather Smith-Thomas





ird's Hill Wagyu is nestled in the farmland of western New Brunswick, Canada, just north of Maine, a region with rolling hills, springs and streams - well suited for raising cattle.

Bill and Jocelyn Barrett purchased their farm in 2000 and named it Birds Hill Farms. They built their home there the next year. Birds Hill Farm purchased a herd of purebred Herefords in 2007 and raised polled Herefords for ten years. It was primarily a cow/calf operation with a commitment to excellent breeding stock. At their peak in that program they were calving 50-75 cows annually.

Their Wagyu journey began in 2017 with the purchase of fullblood Wagyu embryos from Dr. Mel Crane from Prince Edward Island. Dr. Crane was one of the first farms to introduce Wagyu to Atlantic Canada. The remaining Herefords in the herd were used as recipis for the embryos the first three years.

The transition to Wagyu was motivated by several factors. Bill and Jocelyn were attracted to raising Wagyu by their ease of calving, less feed required and longevity of Wagyu females. They also witnessed the successes of the emerging Wagyu breed in North America, and who could argue with offering perhaps the best tasting beef available to consumers.

"Their experience with purebred Herefords taught my parents the importance of strong cow families as the foundation of a good herd," said Jessica Frenette, their daughter who joined the family business in 2022.

The herd genetics represents females purchased from Dr. Crane, the Bowman dispersal and production sales of Vermont Wagyu, Caroland Farms and Wilder's. The availability of elite bull semen from Australia completes the backbone of their breeding program.

Jessica worked for the federal government in Canada for about 10 years, and in September of last year her parents asked if she would consider coming on board and taking an active role as president of Bird's Hill Wagyu. "I was delighted to be able to work with my parents and work in an environment where I could meet new people, learn new things every day, and challenge myself in new and different ways; it was an absolute no-brainer."

She flew to South Carolina after leaving her job with the federal government, to attend the Annual Wagyu conference, and at that same time visited the Wilders Farm for their Open House day. "I travelled to attend the conference by myself and rented a car to drive several hours up to Wilders. I wondered what on earth I was doing, because I didn't know anything about this. I was so nervous and didn't know what to expect. The welcome I received was unbelievable; everyone was so friendly—not only the people at Wilders but also the people who were visiting there from other Wagyu farms. I felt right at home. Everyone was so open, and so kind, and I got to chat with many lovely people. By then I was so excited to go to the conference, meet new people, and learn more. The team at Vermont Wagyu and Alex Vincent took me under their wing at the conference and I have been attending ever since."

She feels that she has learned something new every day and is extremely grateful for the relationships she has developed along the way. "I think building long lasting relationships in any business is key, and I am thankful for my mentors in the industry. I can reach out to them when I have questions and they are very patient and supportive" Jessica says.

"I also want to give a shout out to Mercedes from JDA. Her guidance at auctions during our early days, giving us insight, advice, background information and contacts, allowed us to make sound decisions. We are very thankful for that."

"My parents, especially my mom, is very hands-on. She is in the barn every day, checking on the calves and making sure everyone is happy and healthy. She is an integral part of the success of our farm," Jessica says.

The family is planning to add an experienced herd manager this year. "He or she will join the 3 of us, our farm hand and our provincial veterinarian to form our Birds Hill team."

Jessica feels it has been an awesome experience being able to work directly with her parents. "I came into this, not knowing very much about breeding Wagyu cattle, but being very open and honest about that and continuing to learn and progress. Looking at where we started and where we are now, and where we want to go, I am so glad to be a part of this with my parents, to grow with them and work with them. I've never been a part of something this rewarding, in my entire life. In my old job, I didn't have the same passion. People always say you should find what our passion is, and what you really love to do, and you'll never work a day in your life!" Your work is your pleasure.



"I totally understand that, now. I am very thankful that this is what I get to do," Jessica says.

What are Birds Hill Wagyu's plans for the future? "We are just getting started, and we will build our beef market to restaurants and direct to customer. We feel there is significant potential to grow that opportunity," she says.

They aspire to develop progeny from their sires and dams that will attract interest from other breeders. "Those efforts will determine the size of our herd. We are now in the process of building a new barn that will accommodate more animals, scheduled to be done by the end of this summer. We have long winters, so we are investing in more infrastructure to accommodate our climate."

They have also acquired more land and are expanding the pastures. "We are working with an agronomist who will set us up for rotational grazing. This is something that we were missing—to make the most of our forage and having new insights into the best grazing practices and patterns for our animals, making sure we give our pastures adequate rest time to allow for optimal growth," she says.

"I don't live on the farm, so when I drive there and take my children (a 5-year-old and a 7-year-old), Connor and Logan, they love going to Grammy and Grandpa's farm. They ask to go every weekend. They want to help with the chores, go in the side-by-side and check out the pastures and the cattle. They each have their own farm gear and boots and are ready to help with whatever needs to be done."

"It is so special for my parents to be able to share the farming experience with their grandchildren and with me. I have brothers and step-siblings as well, and they also have children, and love to come out and experience the farm. Family teamwork is wonderful and it's something that's hard to explain to people who haven't been on a farm or around animals. When I go out to the farm, that's my happy place. I don't know how to explain it, but when I get out there it feels different; when we go to the farm it's almost like we've slowed down time," she says.

One highlight this year was Birds Hill Wagyu recently being featured at a well-known gourmet restaurant in Moncton, New Brunswick. The Black Rabbit prepares different tasting





menus featuring local farms. "Our Wagyu was offered in each course of the 8-course tasting menu, including the dessert! Each course was paired with a special type of Sake made by a certified Japanese Sake sommelier. It was an amazing experience and the feedback we received from guests was by far the best part of it all," she says.

"Every day is a learning day for us; we realize that we are new to this game. We are appreciative of all the people who are guiding us along the way and continuing to be mentors to me and my family." 🍷



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Clearwater Ridge

By Heather Smith-Thomas





Clearwater Ridge is a multi-generational agricultural family with Les and Cindy Slatter and their three sons. This July Les and Cindy will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary.

They named their Wagyu operation after their oldest son Ridge (who had the idea to start raising Wagyu and introduced the family to this breed) and their favorite spring pasture along the Clearwater River. This is a pasture they love. "This pasture is steep and beautiful and overlooks the Clearwater River," says Cindy.

Their focus today is on raising grass fed 100% DNA-tested animals, traceable to Japanese full-blood Wagyu bloodlines. Cindy and Les and their sons—Ridge, Beau and Lane—work together on this ranch to produce top-of-the line Wagyu cattle.

"My dad was a cattleman," says Les. "He raised commercial cattle and I was involved with the ranch as a kid." Les started bottle-raising a few calves when he was 5 years old. By the time he was 7 years old he'd earned enough to buy his first cow, and started in 4-H when he was 9—taking his own calf that he raised from one of his own cows. Then he went on to FFA, and in his last year in high school he had the Grand Champion market steer.

He worked summers on a cattle ranch, and continued doing that after he finished school. He had a herd of cows, and after he and Cindy were married they kept raising cattle. Cindy's grandparents on both sides were also cattle ranchers, so ranching is also in her background. She and Les were 4-H leaders for many years, and all of their boys were in 4-H, with pigs and steers. Agriculture is an important part of their lives.

When Ridge was in 5th grade he spent \$20 at a local livestock market to buy a bottle calf that was half Holstein and half Angus. "I raised her up as a cow and got a good start from her," Ridge says.

In 2016 Ridge talked them into buying a Wagyu heifer. He'd become very interested in Wagyu cattle a few years earlier but at that time felt they were too expensive. "We went to Jerry Reeves' Bar R sale in Pullman in 2016 and purchased our first heifer,

Bar R C1. Jerry picked her out for us, out of 30 head. She was a very docile animal and became a really good cow. Through the years we've flushed her many times."

In 2018 they went back to Jerry's sale and bought another heifer. Jerry has helped them a lot; he became a local mentor to look up to, and leased them a bull.

"Ridge and I also visited Crescent Harbor ranch in Oak Harbor, Washington, owned by Ralph Valdez, and purchased semen from him. Shortly after that, we started doing artificial insemination and embryo transplants with the assistance of veterinarian Dean Koesel. His business is called DNA Embryo Transfers, Inc. in Deer Park, Washington," Les says.

In 2019 they went to the Baker City, Oregon auction and bought some Wagyu cattle that came from Arizona. In the cows they purchased at that sale, one of them was a great-granddaughter of the first Wagyu born in the U.S. as an embryo transplant. They flushed one of those cows with sexed semen from Shigetani 5 and got 21 number 1 embryos, which was amazing, from just a conventional flush and they were all female calves.

"Out of those 21 number 1 embryos from that cow, from the sexed semen, one of the recipient cows had twins. They are identical and they stay together all the time. They each weighed 67 pounds at birth, and look exactly the same." Les had had some twins in the past, but never identical twins.

"We went to the Passion for Prime sale in Kansas last year and took some heifers and cows. We took 6 heifers and 2 pairs to that sale again this year," he says.

They've used semen from foundation bulls. "We bought some semen from Wilders Wagyu, from a Sanjirou 3 son and are really excited, looking forward to seeing what those offspring will be like," says Ridge.

He enjoys looking at all the data and the breeding records, seeing what goes best with what. This breed is really growing now, and a good market to be in. "We've been selling our bulls and females by private treaty but are also taking some fullblood Wagyu beef to local farmer's markets this year," he says.

The Wagyu on their place are all

fullbloods, but they still have some of the original stock cows to utilize as recipients for embryos. Their Wagyu herd has been selected for good temperament and marbling. It's a well-rounded breeding program. "We started out with Haruki 2 for our first flush and went to Kenhanafuji for the second, and several others after that," he says.

"As for cattle management, we rotate pastures with the cattle," Cindy says. They have a winter, spring and summer pasture, and leave the cattle on grass just about year-round. This is very desirable for people who want grass-fed beef, and is good for their feeding program because it's cost effective.

Their ranch is based in Clarkston, Washington but they also have pasture in Deary, Idaho. Their spring pasture is above the breaks of the Clearwater River, the summer pasture is in Deary, Idaho, and the winter pasture is along the Snake River in Washington.

"This has all been great for our family," she says. "This program is something that brings us together, and we have a great team. We have two grandchildren—a 7-year-old grandson and a 3-year-old granddaughter—and they are our son Beau's children. We are also expecting our third grandchild, which will be a boy, and will be Lane's son. That baby is due July 1st. My birthday is July 2nd so maybe I will get a very special birthday boy! My husband Les was born on his mom's birthday, so maybe this will happen again," Cindy says.

"I work off the farm; I retired from the local school district but I teach classes for Spokane Community College. We also have a lot of rental property as well as cattle, so we all stay very busy!" she says.

Everyone has really liked the bulls they've sold. "We sold some bulls to Montana ranchers who are using them to create F1s and a fullblood Wagyu herd," says Ridge.

Plans for the future are simply to keep building the herd and having the best genetics they can. "We hope to continue with these sales, like the Salina, Kansas Passion for Prime," says Ridge. "We want to keep improving the breed, making new relationships with other people in the industry, and keep doing our best!"







<< Page 24

Ridge also has a degree in social sciences from WSU, with a minor in horticulture. The horticulture has come in handy in understanding soil, plants, etc. "I had classes in soils and agronomy and that has been very useful," he says.

They sell some beef to friends and neighbors, selling whole beef, halves and quarters, or whatever they want. "These are processed at a local meat market called Four Friends, and it's a USDA-inspected facility," Cindy says. This gives their customers a taste of what good beef is really like!

There are so many advantages to Wagyu meat. "100% fullblood Wagyu beef contains higher concentrations of MUFA's (mono unsaturated fatty acids) and oleic acid—which is an omega 9 fatty acid. It contains more than wild caught salmon. The marbling in Wagyu beef is also rich in omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids which are essential fatty acids that our bodies cannot produce, and have these in proper balance—which can lower the risk for cancer, Alzheimer's, cardiovascular disease and other unhealthy conditions. I am a cancer survivor and have become much more conscious of healthy, natural foods; these are very important to me," she says. 🍷



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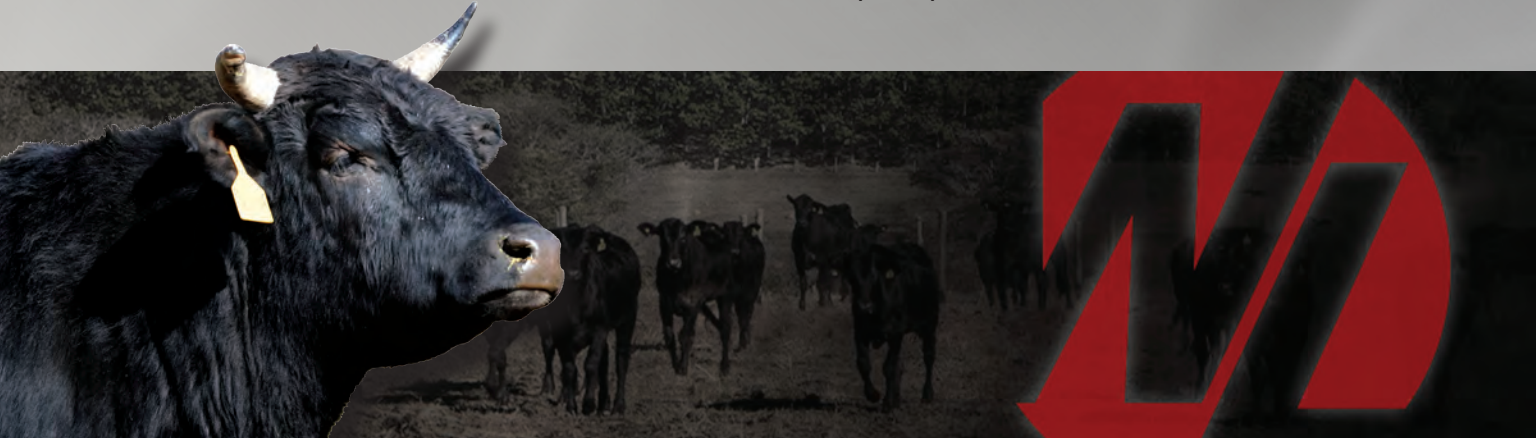
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>> *The Results*

7th Annual Passion For Prime

Averages

34 OF 45 FEMALE LOTS SOLD	\$4,910.00
26 OF 31 BULL LOTS SOLD	\$5,600.00
6 OF 8 PREGNANCY LOTS SOLD	\$5,700.00
41 OF 59 EMBRYO LOTS SOLD	\$575 PER EMBRYO
34 OF 42 SEMEN LOTS SOLD	\$250 PER UNIT

Top Females

Lot 18: LMR MS L10 1558J, 7/3/2021 sired by TYDDEWI N4431, sold by Lone Mountain Cattle Co; **\$11,500** to Tasty Wagyu LLC, San Antonio, TX.

Lot 11: SNL UNITED HOLLYWOOD K405, 5/1/2022 sired by ARUBIAL UNITED P0342, sold by New England Wagyu; **\$11,000** to Woker Wagyu, Greenville, IL.

Lot 19: LMR MS YASUFUKU 1585J, 9/1/2021 sired by WORLD K'S YASUFUKU JR, sold by Lone Mountain Cattle Co; **\$7,000** to King Mountain Ranch, McCoy, CO.

Lot 17: LMR MS N4431 1775J, 10/21/2021 sired by TYDDEWI N4431, sold by Lone Mountain Cattle Co; **\$6,750** to Zion Farms, Hugoton, KS.

Lot 12: SNL Q26 HOPE K029, 4/24/2022 sired by MAX MIKU MAMMUT Q26, sold by New England Wagyu; **\$6,250** to Harrington Farms, Charlotte, NC.

Lot 24: DOUBLE W RANCH 318J, 9/22/2021 sired by WORLD K'S SANJIROU, sold by Double W Ranch; **\$6,000** to Daniel Hershberger, Coalgate, OK.

Lot 15: LMR MS BOND 2501K, 3/25/2022 sired by ARUBIAL BOND Q007, sold by Lone Mountain Cattle Co; **\$6,000** to Tasty Wagyu LLC, San Antonio, TX.

Lot 27: DOUBLE W RANCH 211H, 9/10/2020 sired by WKS-LMR MICHIFUKU 3500A, sold by Double W Ranch; **\$6,000** to Daniel Garlow, Concordia, KS.

Top Bulls

Lot 60: LMR L10 1763J, 9/2/2021 sired by MAYURA L0010, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$20,000** to Milburn American Wagyu, Arriba, CO.

Lot 62: LMR MAINICHI 0365H, 4/6/2020 sired by MAYURA L0010, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$15,000** to Bar V Wagyu, Abilene, KS.

Lot 78: SCW MR MARBLE J99, 9/9/2021 sired by GOORAMBAT MR MARBLE K483, sold by Booth Creek Wagyu Ranch; **\$10,000** to Wilders Wagyu, Clayton, NC.

Lot 59: LMR BOND 1810J, 12/6/2021 sired by ARUBIAL BOND Q007, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$9,500** to Griswold Cattle, Stillwater, OK.

Lot 73: DOUBLE W RANCH 149H, 3/27/2020 sired by LMR KITAGUNI 1441Y, sold by Double W Ranch; **\$6,750** to Denise Fecke, Bonfield, IL.

Lot 54: SANTAS LITTLE HELPER 803, 3/07/2022 sired by KITATERUYASUDOI J2810, sold by Wagyu Sekai; **\$6,250** to Roaring Springs Ranch, Frenchglen, OR.

Lot 71: DOUBLE W RANCH 151H, 3/29/2020 sired by WORLD K'S SANJIROU, sold by Double W Ranch; **\$6,000** to Roaring Springs Ranch, Frenchglen, OR.

Top Pregnancies

Lot 85: MAYURA ITOSHIGENAMI JNR X LMR MS ITOSHIGENAMI 9610G ET, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$5,500 to 4S Wagyu**, Valley Ford, WA.

Lot 86: ARUBIAL BOND Q007 X LMR MS L10 0353H, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$5,750 to Jessup Dean Cattle**, Eden, UT.

Top Embryos

Lot 136: MAYURA NOTORIOUS N0387 X LMR MS ITOSHIGENAMI 6932D, 3 Embryos, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$3,750 per embryo to Michael Broussard**, Beaumont, TX.

Lot 122: SUMO CATTLE CO MONJIRO Q51 X SUMO CATTLE CO DAI 2 KINNTOU Q208, 2 Embryos, sold by Sumo Cattle Company; **\$2,300 per embryo to Kiker Cattle Co**, Beaumont, TX.

Lot 121: SUMO CATTLE CO MICHIFUKU P647 X SUMO CATTLE CO FUKU K174, 2 Embryos, sold by Sumo Cattle Company; **\$2,000 per embryo to Kiker Cattle Co**, Beaumont, TX.

Lot 94: ARUBIAL UNITED P0342 X LMR MS MAYURA 0566H, 2 Embryos, sold by Walker Cattle Company; **\$1,200 per embryo to Melaine Reynolds**, Greenville, IL.

Lot 138: HB BIG AL 502 X LAG 2117F, 4 Embryos, sold by Legendary Akaushi; **\$1,200 per embryo to Swanson Cattle Co**, Oxford, NE.

Lot 95: ARUBIAL UNITED P0342 X LMR MS MAYURA 0741H, 3 Embryos, sold by Wedekind Farms; **\$1,150 per embryo to Diamond H Wagyu**, Lindsay, OK.

Lot 130: MYM ARUBIAL UNITED P0342 X LMR MS ITOSHIGENAMI 0100X, 3 Embryos, sold by Lone Mountain Ranch; **\$1,100 per embryo to Michael Broussard**, Beaumont, TX.

Top Semen

Lot 151: WSI UMEMARU, 2 Units, sold by Wagyu Sekai; **\$2,900 per unit to Seven Oaks Farm**, Woodruff, SC.

Lot 171: HP WAGYU RELIABLE R0157H, 5 Units, sold by HP Wagyu; **\$1,500 per unit to Wilders Wagyu**, Clayton, NC.

Lot 156A: HB BIG AL 502, 1 Unit, sold by Legendary Akaushi; **\$900 per unit to David Mills**, Spicewood, TX.

Lot 173B: MAYURA R0152, 5 Units, sold by HP Wagyu; **\$750 per unit to Rachel Fogarty**, Jordan, MN.

Lot 149: WYNDFORD ITOGUNI 308H, 5 Units, sold by Wynford Wagyu; **\$750 per unit to Mike Mulin**, Grapeland, TX.

Lot 173A: MAYURA R0152, 5 Units, sold by HP Wagyu; **\$750 per unit to Wagyu Sekai**, Canada.

With over 150 registered buyers, the 2023 Passion for Prime commanded great interest from all over North America and beyond. With some of the best animals at this event to date, those in attendance had the opportunity to see some of the best Wagyu available for purchase at the present time. Even with amazing cattle boasting spectacular pedigrees, a handful of lots did not sell and are still available. This very disappointing reality included the "Gold Digger" bull and semen interest. Even with a \$300,000 bid from Australia, the bull did not meet his reserve price. With the value so high on a handful of animals, the consignors who retained their lots will have impeccable genetics to continue to breed in their own programs. The largest success of the day was the ample amount of new breeders joining the Wagyu industry and the many trailers owned by sellers that went home empty and with new clients to add to their lists.

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OUT & ABOUT

Wagyu Sales, Shows and Other Happenings

Save the Date Upcoming Events

2023

JUNE

10 Bar V Wagyu Production Sale
Salina, Kansas

JULY

7 Wagyu Sekai - Royal Bloodlines Sale
Puslinch, ON, Canada

SEPTEMBER

1 Lone Mountain Ranch Bull & Frozen
Genetics Sale
WagyuLive.com

11-24 AU Wagyu Association International Tour
Canada & US

21-23 AWA Conference
San Antonio, Texas

24-29 World Wagyu Conference
Texas

OCTOBER

8 M6 Ranch Wagyu Frozen Genetics Sale
WagyuLive.com

21 DL Ranch Texas Production Sale
Montgomery, Texas

NOVEMBER

4 Stay WILD 2023 - Wilders Wagyu
Production Sale
Turkey, North Carolina

11 TWA Fall Harvest
Luling, Texas

2024

FEBRUARY

16 The Invitational
Sonoma, California

MARCH

2 A5 Wagyu Production Sale
Virginia

16 Triangle B Ranch Production Sale
Stigler, Oklahoma

APRIL

6 M6 Ranch Bull & Female Production Sale
Alvarado, Texas

27 Booth Creek Wagyu Production Sale
Oldsburg, Kansas

MAY

25 Bar R Wagyu Production Sale
Pullman, Washington

JUNE

8 Passion For Prime
Salina, Kansas

SEPTEMBER

7 New England Wagyu Production Sale
Peterborough, New Hampshire

19-21 AWA Conference
TBD

NOVEMBER

4 Stay WILD 2024 - Wilders Wagyu
Production Sale

GOLD FINGER

GMVF22T27

88

gest length
birth weight
200-day Wt
400-day Wt
600-day Wt

Trait	Correlation
gest length	0.25
birth weight	0.45
200-day Wt	0.20
400-day Wt	0.15
600-day Wt	0.18
mat cow Wt	0.22
milk	0.10
scrotal size	0.28
carcase Wt	0.05
eye muscle area	0.40
rump fat	0.05
retail yield	0.45
marble score	0.45
marble fineness	0.45
wagyu breeder index	0.45
self replacing index	0.45
fullblood terminal index	0.45
f1 terminal index	0.45



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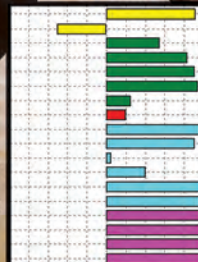
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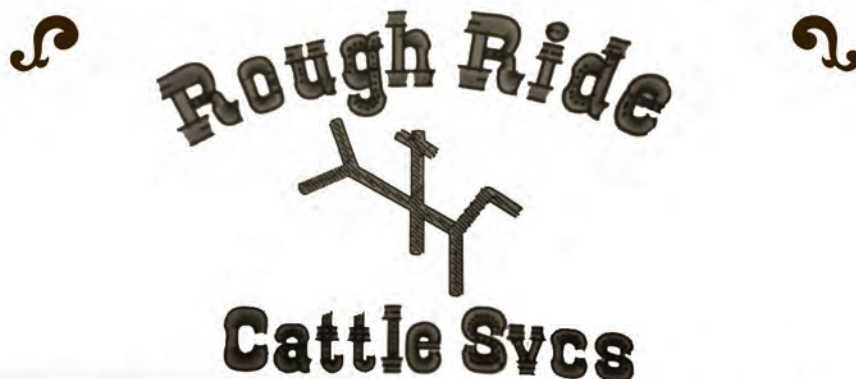
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BAR R 52Y

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N VALLEY

By Heather Smith-Thomas

wagyu



Steve and Jamie Ries took a roundabout path to Eden Valley, Minnesota where they now raise Wagyu cattle. Jamie grew up in Glenwood, Minnesota and moved to Arizona, then moved to Oregon where she met and married Steve.

They lived in Oregon for a while, then Jamie's brother and sister in Minnesota were having lots of kids and she wanted to be closer to them. "I convinced Steve to move to Minnesota during a very cold winter, to start a farm," Jamie said.

They lived in her sister's basement, then in a motor home on Eden Lake. They worked on her family's farm, called Frank's Greenhouse. One day, while visiting with a local farmer at a Farmer's Market, they learned that his farm was possibly for sale and they decided to buy it.

The 78-acre farm has an interesting history. The federal government granted a 10-mile corridor to the railroad that was built in Eden Valley in 1912 and the railroad sold some of the ground to help finance construction. Many homesteads along the tracks were the result, including the farm where Steve and Jamie live now. It had gone through several owners since 1912 and then the people who bought it in the '60s started raising turkeys. Mike Langmo bought the farm in the late '70s and continued to raise turkeys until Steve and Jamie bought it from him—and they continue to raise turkeys.

Some of the equipment used on the farm came from Jamie's grandfather's farm. The original farmhouse has been converted into a greenhouse. Many of the crops and vegetables they plant today are started in that old farmhouse.

"We started our farm 9 years ago and have a contract with Jennie-O to grow turkeys. We also have a produce business and raise produce on 23 of our acres. We do CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) and self-serve farm stands."

Jamie still has a lot of family nearby—about 45 minutes in each direction. Her brother and sister each have 4 kids. "So we have 8 nieces and nephews and they come over to see our cows and have sleepovers. My brother has 400 Angus, and he goes out to feed them and the kids ride along in the truck, but they don't get to interact with those cattle. They think it is really neat over here at our place because they can feed the cattle and pet them. At my brother's place they just drop off a bale and drive away. The kids think it's pretty cool here, where they can scratch the bull's head and feed the babies."

When Steve was in Oregon about 10 years ago he went to a restaurant and had a Wagyu steak. "He was very impressed with it, and it was a memorable impression. Since we had some extra land on our farm in Minnesota, he started looking

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Steve and Jamie Ries

<< Page 39

into that breed, with the thought of eventually getting some of these cattle. When COVID was going on, there were some on-line auctions and that's where we got started."

While doing his research, Steve called several breeders to get information about these cattle. "Most of the people I contacted were just interested in selling animals," Steve said. "Then I was able to get in touch with Don Brown at Triangle B. We hit it off and he gave me a lot of information about raising these animals. He thought I'd picked the perfect time to get into this business because this breed was starting to get popular."

"Don and I started communicating back and forth and I asked if he would mentor me in this business and he said he would. My first auction where I bought cattle was through Triangle

B. We bought 13 animals and now we have 120 head of breeding stock, about 100 head of American Wagyu steers and about 60 fullblood steers. On our farm I use Trans Ova for embryo implants and we had about 120 head for that. On Don's place I have some cattle that I bring up here to finish out," Steve said.

"We recently purchased the number one heifer in the U.S. and number two in the world. Don and I became lifelong friends; I would not be even close to where I am in this business today if it weren't for him. He has been phenomenal as a mentor. I go down there about 4 times a year to help him with his cattle. At one point he had more than 1400 head. I help him with his auction, and Jamie and I will be having our first genetics sale in 2024. We are the young newbies, but trying

to do it the right way."

Most of the breeding decisions are based on EBVs and the scoring system. "Our cattle are in the top 5%, and now with this new heifer we bought, when we bring her genetics into our program we will probably be in the top 1 to 3% in the entire world."

It's not been without challenges. "The first bull we bought died unexpectedly. Then we got cryptosporidiosis in our calves and lost some. We learned how to give calves IVs and get them rehydrated and keep them alive. We don't like losing any animals; for us they are like family," Steve said.

"We go out there in the pasture and scratch their heads, necks and backs. I go out there and they run to me, rather than running away from me," he said.

Jamie says that part of the garden

produce they grow is just for the cattle. "We have a whole section of kale for them, and they eat the Brussel sprout leaves and broccoli leaves. When they hear the gator driving toward the fence they all start coming toward us because they know they are getting a special treat," she said.

During calving season, it's no problem to tag the new calves. "I am with the cows so much that they trust me," Steve says. "I can put the ear tags in and get a DNA punch and the mamas let me come up to the babies. At one time we had someone here visiting the farm—a person who'd had a lot of cattle experience—and when he got within 15 yards of the baby, the mom was upset and adamantly telling us 'No way are you getting near my baby; I don't know that person!' They don't trust strangers, but they know us."

Steve comes from a marketing background and focuses on finding avenues to sell the meat. "We will probably be selling 250 to 300 steers this year, and we'll have an outlet next year where we will sell close to 600 steers. This has really helped us—being able to make calls to the distributor and talking to chefs, doing events at different restaurants, and a lot of things that many farmers don't know how to do or don't want to take the time to do it, or have to hire someone

to do it," he said.

"We took it in steps, and followed Don's advice. First we got the animals grown and raised and healthy and made sure our feeding plan was right. We use the Protocol Natural feeding program and their minerals. We are diligent in taking care of the cattle and making sure they are up to date on vaccinations and everything they need, to have a healthy life."

The winters in Minnesota are extremely cold. "Some days with wind chill it is minus 50 degrees, but it doesn't seem to bother the cattle if they can get out of the wind. We haven't lost any to weather. We've noticed that our marbling is even greater in the wintertime than some

of the ones we harvest in the summer. We think part of that is due to putting on their winter coat—and they eat a lot, to stay warm. We go through a lot of feed in the winter."

The calves are very healthy, and good size. "Our average calf weight at birth is about 85 pounds on the fullbloods, and the American Wagyu calves are close to 100 pounds at birth. For our American Wagyu we use registered Angus and registered Hereford cows for breeding stock (bred to Wagyu bulls) and use TransOva for all our recip cows," Steve said.

"It's a lot of learning and a lot of hard work, and we absolutely love these animals." They are very smart, and easy to work with.

"We'll be part of the American Wagyu Conference this year; we will be with JDA and Don (Triangle B) to have a booth together. We'll be talking about the genetics coming from the heifer we bought," Steve said.

"Don had me go into this in stages. Now that we're getting prepared for a genetics sale and have some extra breeding stock to sell, and some good embryos and semen, I think this will make another big difference for our business plan." This breed is just starting to take off and really grow.

Jamie explains that their business model is very diversified. "On our website, people from all over the world can

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on a Wagyu beef stew dinner to raise money for mission trips, for kids to go to Puerto Rico. We also have a festival every year, and the past two years we've served Wagyu burgers and broths. In these various ways we are giving back to our community and also introducing this meat to more people so they become familiar with it."

Eventually a few more farm/ranch families might decide to raise these animals because they can do very well on even a small property

with a few of these animals. The initial investment to buy them is high, but a person can make more per head when selling the meat. "A lot of farmers are a bit shy about investing this much, to get into it. Here in Minnesota we are the only ones with registered full-blood Wagyu. There are some farms raising American Wagyu but they are not focusing on fullbloods." There are still many benefits, however, in breeding Wagyu to Angus or Hereford cows to raise F1s.

Having the only fullbloods in the area right now may help Eden Valley Wagyu stand out, raising seedstock. Having a few Wagyu in the area will also help beef producers become more familiar with what they look like; often a rancher's first impression is that these animals do not look like beef cattle.

"When we brought our first 13 Wagyu home, a lot of the farmers in the area that we'd become friends with came over to see them because they were curious," Steve said. "The ones we bought were young and looked scrawny, and our friends

wondered why we would spend a lot of money on these animals! It's funny, because now, they are kind of jealous because they've seen our success and how popular the breed had become. They are now saying we were right, because we got into this at the right time. Now some of them are thinking about buying a bull so they can get better marbling with their Angus and all their crosses," he said.

"We've gone to a couple of the local auctions here, and they still haven't gotten it figured out yet; Wagyu cattle or crosses don't bring as much money at these auctions as they should. We were able to pick up a few cows that someone was selling; that person had bought semen through a semen supplier, thinking they'd produce some American Wagyu and they would be worth a lot of money. They thought they could finish them out at 14 to 15 months and instead they find out it takes 23 to 26 months, and if they didn't feed them right, that's another issue," Steve said.

"One guy here inseminated 13 cows and thought he'd make \$4000 to \$5000 per cow and that didn't happen. He finally took them to a local auction and no one there actually knew their value. We picked them up for \$1800 apiece," he said.

"Until people get educated, these cattle won't sell well at a regular auction. Speaking of education, our processing is at a USDA-inspected facility about 30 minutes from us, and the big thing I've learned about USDA inspectors is that each one you go to is different, and there are challenges trying to prove that these cattle are Wagyu. I had all the American Wagyu Association paperwork, the sire and dam, and they still locked down the meat and wouldn't let me sell it for about 3 to 6 weeks—until they were 100% sure I wasn't trying to scam the public with some other kind of beef and just calling it Wagyu. Still, to this day, every single one I take in, I go through so many hurdles, compared to an Angus guy who shows up and drops off his animals."

In a way, it's good that the animals are being scrutinized, to make sure these cattle are actually what they are advertised to be. "This is good, but when I have all the proof, including my DNA samples, and all the money I'm spending to show the lineage on


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order fullblood or American Wagyu beef that can be shipped directly to them. Also we have a distributor who is focusing on restaurants and retail locations, plus the genetics side of things that we are just now diving into. With those three different areas, we feel that we are in a good position and poised for success, with the growth of this breed," she said.

Even 10 years ago, most people didn't know anything about Wagyu cattle. Maybe they saw "Kobe beef" on a restaurant menu, but had no clue what it was. Now more people are becoming aware of Wagyu and what this breed can do. "I think rural Minnesota is still just getting on board with it. We see Wagyu on menus in restaurants in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) area but it's rare in outlying areas. Eventually it will get up to speed," she said.

She and Steve go out of their way to introduce more people to the good qualities of the meat. "It's a new thing here in our region, so we've been donating a lot of meat to our church events and charities. We recently put

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these cattle, you'd think that after slaughtering my cattle for 3 or 4 years, they would know I am not going to bring in Angus instead of a Wagyu," Steve said.

"Eventually it will get easier, because I think in the future the Wagyu breed will take over as the most popular beef to eat, in the U.S." It has a lot to offer the beef industry—even the F1s and F2s—because of the marbling and meat quality.

"We've been very blessed, having mentors and people around us who support us on this journey, getting to know Mercedes and Don and other people from the auctions. When we bought the number one heifer in the U.S. (and number 2 in the world) we started getting calls from all over, including Canada, Australia, the Philippines, and it put us on the map a little bit."

Currently Steve and Jamie are focused on building a restaurant presence. "We have a restaurant that put us on their menu, serving Wagyu beef from Eden Valley Wagyu and this was the highlight for last year—seeing our beef on a menu." 🍖

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37	5.8	3.6	0.59	\$317	\$344	\$286	\$269
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42	6.7	3.2	0.56	\$291	\$331	\$305	\$298
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62	2.7	2.3	0.34	\$339	\$309	\$272	\$224
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#2 \$F1TI Sire born in the USA

M6 ITOSHIGENAMI R0128H

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he argument to keep or remove horns on Wagyu cattle can be a hot button

discussion among breeders. Wagyu have a classic look about them with their horns being a significant breed characteristic. Many breeders love the way Wagyu look with them and claim to never have a problem and others will not have horns on their property. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, dehorned cattle require less feed trough space. They are easier and less dangerous to handle and transport, present a lower risk of interference from dominant animals at feeding time, pose a reduced risk of injury to udders, flanks, and eyes of other cattle. They also present a lower injury risk for handlers, and exhibit fewer aggressive behaviors associated with individual dominance.

If you are one of those breeders that has chosen to dehorn your cattle, there are many ways to go about it but reducing pain and stress on the animal should be a primary concern. A lidocaine block and a dose of pain reliever can go a long way to relieving stress and maintaining comfort during and after the procedure. Animals can be disbudded as soon as the day they are born and dehorned at any stage if certain precautions are taken.

CAUSTIC PASTE

Dehorning paste can be used on calves up to two weeks old. It's recommended to use the paste as soon as a horn button can be felt. A lidocaine block and a dose of Banamine or oral Meloxicam should be administered prior to the procedure. Both can be obtained through your veterinarian with a prescription. Wearing protective gloves during the procedure will protect your skin. The active ingredient in the paste is calcium hydroxide 37.8% and sodium hydroxide 24.9% and will burn skin quickly. Use a set of clippers to remove the hair around the horn bud and its base. Rough up the skin across the top of and around the base of the bud with a mild wire brush. Put a protective coating of

bag balm around the perimeter of the horn bud to keep adjacent skin from becoming burned. A tongue depressor works great for this. Use another tongue depressor to apply the caustic paste to the horn bud. On calves less than a week old, use an amount about the size of a nickel. On calves older than a week, use an amount about the size of a quarter. A piece of duct tape can be applied to cover the area to keep the paste in place as well as protect pasture mates and the dam from coming in contact with the paste. The duct tape will fall off in a matter of days. Some larger breeders find this process cumbersome and labor intensive, but it works well for breeders that handle their calves at birth.

DISBUDDING IRON

Irons used for dehorning come in many different sizes and shapes. One of the most effective is a two-sided brass electric iron. It has different sized cups on either side and maintains its heat very well. Irons can be used as long as the horn buds on your calf haven't gotten so large that the cup on the iron can't get completely around the bud. A $\frac{3}{4}$ " end can be used on calves 3-10 days old. A 1" end can be used for older calves, 2-12 weeks old. Again, a lidocaine block and dose of pain reliever is suggested to maintain the comfort of the animal prior to starting the procedure. Make sure the iron is preheated to achieve maximum heat. Shave the area over and adjacent to the horn bud. Apply the appropriately sized cup on a preheated iron over the horn bud for approximately 5-10 seconds. When you remove the iron, you should see a white ring that completely encircles the horn bud. You should be able to pop the horn bud off then apply the iron for another 5-10 seconds to obtain an appropriate burn around where the horn bud was. Apply a topical antiseptic.

BARNES STYLE DEHORNERS

A Barnes dehorner is a hinged, closed set of sharp scoops which is placed over the horn against the base and surrounding skin. Opening the handles forces the cutting edges

together, slicing through the skin and under the horn. These dehorners are typically used on cattle with horns large enough that they can't be removed with paste or an iron. They come in many different sizes and can be used on cattle up to around a year old. A lidocaine block and pain reliever is highly recommended when using scoops. The area around the base of the horn should be shaved to expose the area you wish to target. Place the scoops deep down over the horn with the handles close together. Pull the handles apart firmly without twisting, making sure you are just below the hairline. Significant bleeding and blood spray can occur when using scoops. You may choose to use a hot iron to cauterize locations that bleed profusely. A larger sinus opening may be exposed on cattle with larger horns after removal so fly control is of high importance post horn removal.

WIRE SAW

For more mature cattle or cattle with significant horn bases, complete horn removal can be tricky. A wire saw is a viable option in situations where you'd like to remove more horn than just tipping. A wire saw is a length of obstetric wire fixed between two metal handles that it's wrapped around. A lidocaine block and pain reliever are advised prior to doing this procedure as well. Use clippers to remove the hair around the base of the horn. Some vets advise selecting a line in the horn above the hairline rather than below the hairline on mature cattle. Secure the animal's head so you can maintain the angle you choose to cut on. Work the handles back and forth to saw the horns off. You may choose to have a hot iron handy during this procedure to cauterize any significant bleeding. Because wire saws are typically used on more mature cattle, you'll notice a larger sinus opening once the horn is removed and will have to take fly control into account if choosing this method.

BANDING

Lately several cattle owners are choosing to band the horns of more mature animals. Banding can be



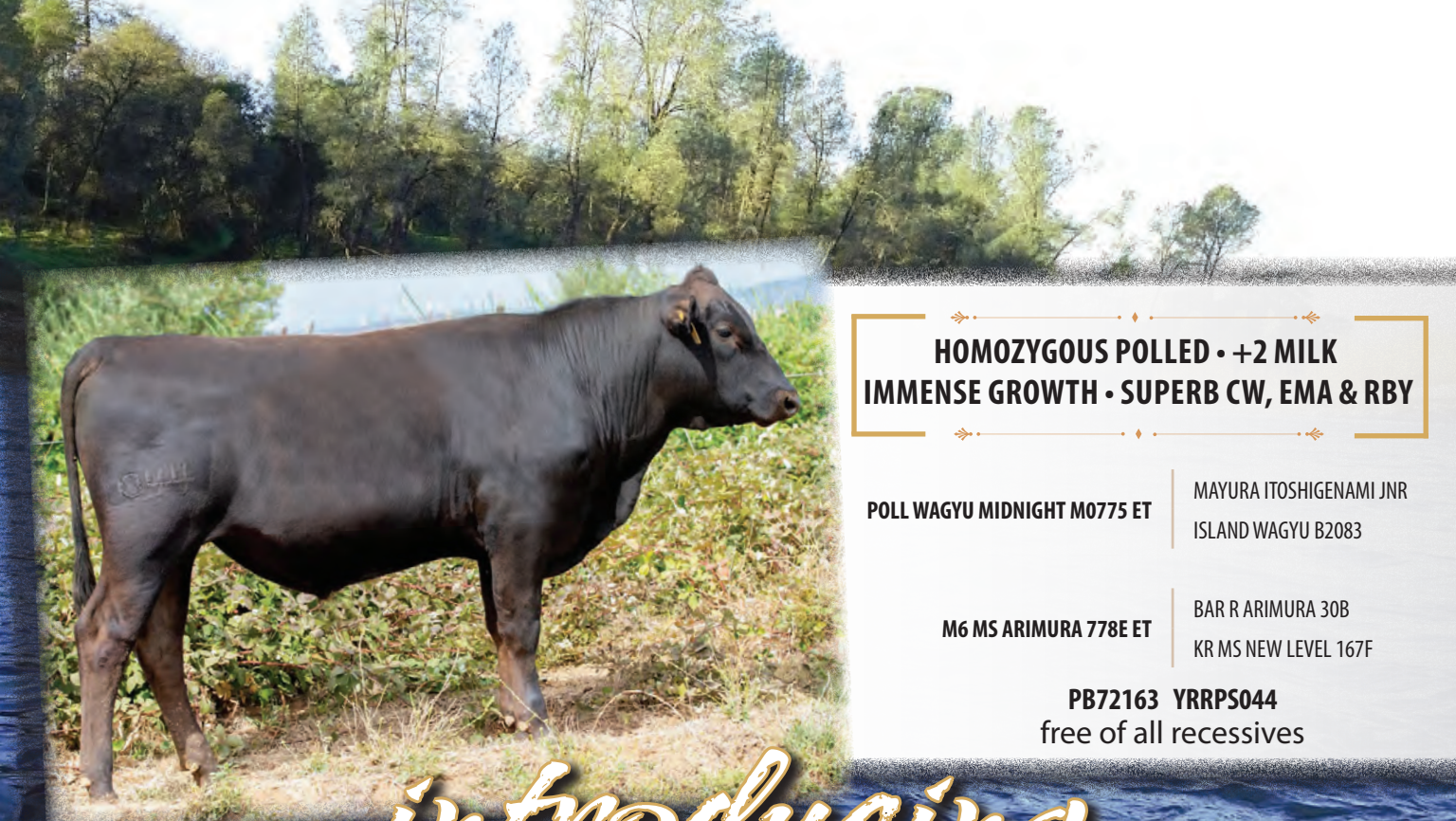
Horns

By Ronda Applegarth

done with a Callicrate bander, an XL bander or even an elastrator on younger cattle. A lidocaine block and pain reliever is suggested prior to this procedure. The pain of this procedure only lasts about 30 minutes until the area around the horn becomes numb. If a lidocaine block is used, the animal never really gets uncomfortable. Shave the area around the base of the horn. Select the bander size you need based on the age and size of the animal you are dehorning. Apply the band to the base of the horn and roll or push the band down below the hairline. If you're using the Callicrate bander or an elastrator, the bands are round and may want to roll up the horn. You can either hold the band in place until it makes an indentation below the hairline or place a wrap of duct tape around the band to keep it in place. A dose of tetanus antitoxin is suggested. Horns typically fall off between one and two months after band application. This slow approach allows the large sinus cavities of more mature animals to close gradually as the horn is being removed.

If breeders choose to dehorn, there are other viable options as well as the methods mentioned here to accomplish a disagreeable task. All dehorning methods hold some potential dangers for the animals you are working with. A veterinarian should always be consulted if you are not familiar with dehorning on your own or if you have questions regarding any stage of each procedure.

In conclusion, Wagyu breeders will ultimately need to choose for themselves whether to dehorn or not to dehorn. Whichever side of the dehorning debate their preference falls, they will have to agree to disagree. 🐮



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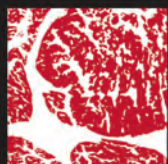
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