



HATS OFF to AG

The Saratoga Sun's 2019 Salute to Agriculture

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**A proud part of
Carbon County's
ranching tradition**



Scenic meadows on the Peryam Ranch rest under a big Wyoming sky.



Photos courtesy Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust
The historic family ranch sits on the banks of the Encampment River.

Conserving family history

Fourth generation of homesteading family conserves 543 acres in perpetuity

By Joshua Wood

The Upper North Platte River Valley, much like the rest of Wyoming, is filled with family histories that are an integral part of the history of the area as well. The descendants of original homesteaders often still operate the very ranches founded by their ancestors. Sometimes, though, a family will find that they are working on far less land than their forebears. Such was the case for Alan Peryam, great-grandson of William T. Peryam.

"Suddenly, you look up and this famous old ranch, one of the original ranches in the Valley, is only down to our 600 acres. That became impetus for us to pursue it. We'd like it to stay. We're proud of the role the family, over generations, has played in that Valley."

The discussion of conserving the family ranch began in the late 1990s with Dr. John Lunt, a founding member of the Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust (WSGLT).

"Two of my three children and my sister and one of her children were in town and my brother was there and we sat outside on one of those summer afternoons that Wyoming is famous for," said Peryam.

According to Peryam, most of the conservation easements with the WSGLT at that time were wealthy landowners who donated their property that would then be used as a tax break. Lunt asked the Peryam family if they were interested in contributing their ranch to the WSGLT. At the time, the Peryams were not interested in contributing it, but were interested in preserving it.

William T, or W.T., Peryam came to the Valley in 1879 with his wife, Alice, and two children. After arriving in what is now Riverside, the Peryam family would increase by five for a total of seven children. Originally from Cornwall, family history as written down in the book "Saratoga & Encampment Wyoming: An Album of Family Histories" states that W.T. was the only son of an "aristocratic" family before being orphaned and forced to work in coal mines by his older sister around the age of 13.

After several years in the coal mines, W.T. joined the Merchant Marines, only to jump ship in 1862 in New York "with the intent to join the Union Army and help

free the slaves." He was, instead, sent to Michigan to work in the copper mines before eventually heading west to work, once again, in a coal mine. W.T. would meet his future wife, then Alice Bailey, in Longmont, Colo. and the two were married in 1874.

The Peryam family were believed to be only the third family to arrive in the upper valley and did not wait to begin making their mark on the area. W.T. constructed the Peryam Road House as well as toll-bridge where he charged 25 cents for a team and wagon, or 10 cents for a single rider, to cross the river.

"Unfortunately, the other heirs to great-grandfather W.T. Peryam had inherited and sold various pieces of the land off early, and later," said A. Peryam. "He once had 3,500 deeded acres on the river from our place, upstream to Riverside and clear up to the smelter area. He had other forest permits and he had three sons who homesteaded and added to that, so it was quite a nice holding."

W.T. passed away in 1926, leaving an impact on the Valley. Along with the amount of land owned and the Peryam Road House, there were seven children, 12 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren and more.

"The ranch was run as an estate when my father was younger so it was all held together for 15 or 20 years and then finally divided up among the various heirs and some of them ranched for a while and some of them sold early," Peryam said.

Eventually, the WSGLT found ways to fund the purchase of easements instead of relying on the donations of property. This allowed many ranching families to sell portions of their land and use the money while still being able to keep the property for the purpose of ranching and agriculture. The Peryam family, in the 2000s, faced a similar issue. A. Peryam's brother was interested in selling his interest in the family ranch, but neither A. Peryam nor his sister shared that interest in selling.

"By looking to the legacy aspect of it and the financial ability to help my brother liquidate his interest in the ranch to my sister and me, it was a perfect fit. So we made an application seven-and-a-half years ago to get into the

process," said Peryam.

Unfortunately, when the Peryam family submitted their application, the Federal Government, specifically the Department of Agriculture, began making changes to the farm bill. Because of this, there wasn't a lot of funding available for conserving ranches and so the family was kept waiting until about a year-and-a-half ago.

"We were very happy when the dam sort of broke a year-and-a-half ago as a result of some things that the land trust directors and board did to break the log jam," Peryam said.

Finally, in February, the WSGLT and the Peryam family announced the conservation of 543 acres of the family ranch. A process that began in the late 90s in a conversation with Lunt was now seeing fulfillment. One of the benefits for Peryam, along with preserving his family's way of life, is preserving the Encampment River as well.

"The Encampment River is well known in many circles and one of the benefits, that goes without saying, is by conserving this particular ranch, and others up and down the river, you're also ensuring that the river isn't overdeveloped. I'm encouraging others, along the river particularly, and not just this river, but the Platte. You're not only saving the ranching, the agriculture part of it, you save the river part of it and the wildlife part of it and the scenic value," said Peryam.

Now that the family ranch is conserved, it means that Peryam's son can continue to bring up his own children to enjoy the property, something which, according to Peryam, his son is very excited about.

"We were talking about this and he was relating his experience as a kid who grew up in Denver and went up there as much as we could take them and the wonderful feeling he had and how he tells people 'Well, I know about cattle. My family owns a ranch' and then taking it to the next generation; his children. He's made a big effort to bring them up yearly to have them experience the ranch, the outdoors and so, there, the next generation is especially happy to be a part of a family that has really conserved it in perpetuity."

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Photo by Mike Armstrong

Leonard Burks watches chef John Jump cut Platte Valley Beef at Firewater Public House.

Locally sourced, locally served

Valley restaurant goes extra mile to serve locally grown produce and meats

By Mike Armstrong

Firewater Public House (Firewater) owner Danny Burau has always envisioned his restaurant to have locally grown produce and proteins served at his venue whenever possible.

“We had conversations with ranchers when we opened and the Barkhursts, from LL Livestock, came in we struck up an easy conversation about serving beef or bison from the Platte Valley,” Burau said.

He said the talks centered around how Barkhursts and Firewater could make this work.

“I knew it was going to be a challenge to find a beef producer that could handle as small volume as we had,” Burau said. “LL Livestock shipped three animals to Wyoming Custom Meats in Hudson to be cut to our specifications. Then we went and picked it up.”

He said in order to handle the amount of beef coming in, Firewater had to upgrade its facilities.

“It was challenging, because we have just so much room,” Burau said.

He said the reason Firewater really wanted to have local beef was to give the experience that the restaurant used the animal from nose to tail. Burau was pleased with the beef he received that had been raised in Platte Valley.

“They came in really well marbled and both the rancher and processor both thought the animals had taken to fattening up better than they anticipated,” Burau said. “That was really good to hear because that means we are getting great quality with a local product.”

He said the animals had been grain finished the last couple months. Before that, the cattle fed off the grass. Burau said the American palate prefers grain finished beef and if the cows were not grain fed, the beef would be leaner tasting, similar to elk. This is not the beef taste Americans gravitate towards.

“It depends on how aggressively the animals are being fed grain, but they can add a third of their body weight those last days they are fed grain,” Burau said. “People generally in this country don’t want a true grass fed beef. It tastes like game.”

Burau said he gives the Barkhurst family credit for going through the trouble to make this happen. He said other ranchers have told him, though no slight against Firewater, it would not be financially feasible for them to process such a small quantity.

Beef is traditionally sold and processed in the fall. This makes the timing for purchasing the beef a bit tougher for Firewater because, like most restaurants in the Valley, there is a slowdown in business versus summer.

“When the animals are ready, they have to go,” Burau said. “It is a little leap of faith on our part to sell the beef as we face a downturn.”

Burau said, although purchasing the beef in fall is challenging, he is willing to try.

“Our goal is to purchase as much of our product as close to Saratoga as we possibly can,” Burau said.

He said the beef going to an inspected facility is another challenge.

“I don’t know if a lot of producers realize I can’t serve anything that doesn’t go to an inspected facility,” Burau said. “It is the same way I can’t serve trout that is caught in the river. It is the law.”

Burau said he works closely with health and safety inspectors.

He is hopeful that he will be able to take bison being raised by the Barkhursts.

“Do I want to take bison in the fall versus summer? Not really,” Burau said. “But if that is what I have to do, I will do it.”

Burau likes using Platte Valley beef because he knows exactly how it is treated and cared for.

“There is an organization called Grown in Wyoming,” Burau said. “It is a cool organization.”

According to their website, Grown in Wyoming is the state branded agriculture program of the Wyoming Business Council, designed to differentiate, identify and promote foods and fibers predominantly grown in Wyoming. The program is about a year old.

Currently, Firewater is the

See ‘Locally sourced’ on page 24

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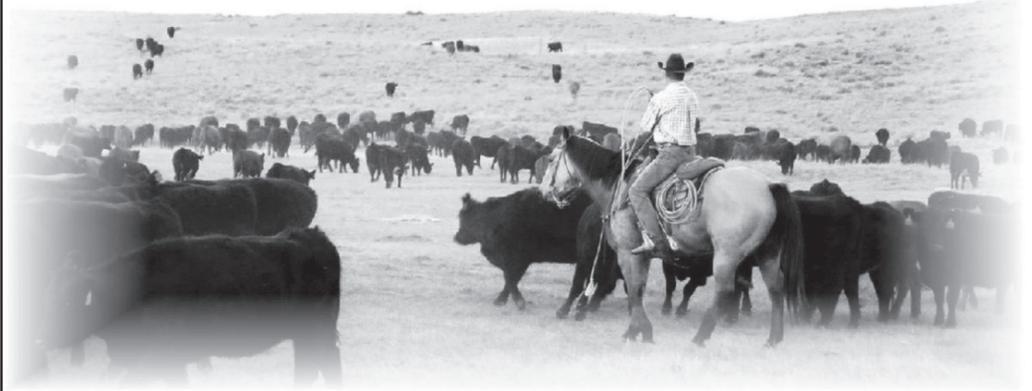


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Seeds of change

Former eastern seed specialist and farmer compares ag views, points out changes

By Mike Armstrong

Steve Priest, the principal of Hanna, Elk Mountain, Medicine Bow (HEM) High School went to Ohio State thinking he was going to major in agronomy. His goal was to graduate and work for the seed company Dekalb.

“In high school I was interested in crops, crop science and seeds, and I knew that is what I wanted to study,” Priest said. “Then my Ag teacher told me I should consider going into Ag Ed. Then, another Ag Ed teacher told me I should look at it, too, so I decided to consider it.”

Priest was raised in central Ohio, about 45 miles east of Columbus where his family owned a farm.

When he went to college, he found out if he went into Ag Ed, instead of agronomy, he could still take all the classes he wanted, but he would be certified to teach science.

He realized he made the right decision after he had an internship with Monsanto in Illinois. Although he enjoyed working for the company, he said doing pure research was not something he enjoyed for a full time job. As a seed scientist, research work would have been a major work component.

“I said, maybe Ag Ed was really right for me after all,” Priest said. “I went through and got Ag Ed degree and was offered an associate-ship position to go through and get my masters at Ohio State.”

The associate position was in statistics, which Priest enjoyed.

“Analyzing data is something that comes easy to me because of my studies and internship,” Priest said. “After I graduated with my masters, I got a teaching position in Utica, Ohio.”

He taught Ag Ed and was the Future Farmers of America advisor for nine years in Utica. The town was in the same area that Priest had been raised.

Priest came out to Wyoming because Ohio had funding challenges to its schools. Since Ag Ed is not a core class, Priest said he could never be assured his job would be funded for the year to come. Priest was in no danger of not having a job, though, because he had a science certificate.

“It could be stressful not knowing if I was going to teach Ag Ed or not, year to year. I decided I wanted to go to another place where agriculture is important to the state and people who live there,” Priest said. “So when we came out here, it was really neat to compare agriculture in Wyoming versus what I grew up with in Ohio.”

Priest said there is a difference in what livestock is produced. He said there are more pigs, for instance, in Ohio. Another difference he noticed is the size of farms to the ranches in Wyoming.

“There are a lot of smaller farms in Ohio,” Priest said. “Our farm was about a 100



Photo by Mike Armstrong

HEM Principal Steve Priest smiles at the Spring Fling held on Friday.

acres, but that 100 acres could feed a lot more livestock than what a 100 acres feeds out here.”

Another noticeable difference is that there is little irrigation on most farms in Ohio. He said that there is enough moisture, that irrigation is not really necessary.

“There are a few guys who do that in Ohio, but in general, mother nature is our water sprinkler,” Priest said. “Wyoming, quite a lot of irrigation on its ranches.”

He said Ohio used to have many more dairy farms, but due to urban encroachment, many had sold their land.

“Unless you are a really, really large operation, there just isn’t as much profit in it any longer,” Priest said. “A lot of dairy farms have gone to just crops and when I go back to Ohio, I see more and more urban encroachment.”

He said he has seen it no only in Ohio, but also Illinois.

“There was a farm that was outside of Chicago some distance that the farmer was paid the price of a half acre that an entire farm used to cost,” Priest observed. “This is hard to turn down and you see more and more farms being turned into subdivisions and honestly, I find this scary.”

He said it has been a problem since he went to college.

“Farm land preservation is so important, because if you continue to lose farmland, how do we feed the consumers with an increasing population?” Priest said. “This could be a real problem as these smaller productive farms go by the wayside.”

He said he doesn’t see this problem in Wyoming.

Priest also said he doesn’t see as much difference between farming and ranching as what some people may feel.

“Ranching might deal more with animals than some farms and farms may have more crops, but the concepts of agriculture is about the same,” Priest said. “I think there might be a difference too about how people perceive genetic engineering if they are urban

versus rural.”

He said when people fear genetic engineering of seeds, Priest points out it has been going on for centuries. Selective breeding has led to hybrid corn, apple trees, other food crops and livestock. This is genetic engineering.

Farmers and ranchers know this and, since most farms and ranches are in more rural areas, genetic engineering is not usually seen in such a strong negative manner as it is by many urban dwellers.

He said because genetic engineering started going to the cellular level and finding the genetic code and cutting down time frames on creating strains, it has made people nervous.

“People have become so far removed from agriculture and the farm,” Priest said. “Until recently, agriculture has done a poor job of advocating for themselves, but now people want to know how it was produced and what went into it.”

Priest understands why consumers want to know all they can about agricultural products they eat, but some farmers don’t understand why suddenly there is this movement and have not acclimated to it. He said for years nobody questioned them, so now some farmers feel a bit on the defensive although there is no conspiracy to keep genetic engineering a secret.

He said many large farms in Ohio are actually families that farm together.

This is not generally the case with the large ranches being formed.

Priest said there are large corporate farms, but he said they are not a prevalent as sometimes presented.

He said with all the changes going on in agriculture, whether you are talking ranching or farming, it is essential to understand how it works in our economy and society.

“I am encouraged by how many students in Carbon County take agriculture as seriously as they do,” Priest said. “Learning as much as we can about agriculture will only serve future generations well as time goes by.”



A love for leather

Encampment resident carries on father's legacy of horse tack and leatherwork

By Joshua Wood

Toni Tolle may not be a native to the Platte Valley, having moved to Encampment in February 2018, but she is a native to the world of agriculture and the West. Born and raised in Hereford, Texas, Tolle spent countless hours in her father's tack and saddle shop. Her father made and repaired saddles, horse tack and repaired boots.

"He didn't get too much into the non-tack stuff," said Tolle.

An early benefit to having a father who made saddles was that Tolle used the saddles when showing and riding horses.

"Since I showed horses and rode horses, I used what he made so it made an appreciation for it," Tolle said. "I appreciated the quality that it took for a handmade (saddle) as opposed to buying something factory made."

Tolle had been on a horse for as long as she could remember and jokes that she was riding even before she could walk. That love for horses would eventually lead her out of Texas and into southern Oklahoma, near the city of Ardmore, where she would work as assistant horse trainer to James Payne.

She would eventually find her way back to the world of leatherwork and horse tack. Tolle married her husband in 2010 and welcomed her first of two sons in 2014, but in 2015 her father would suffer a debilitating stroke.

"That's kind of how I got started. He had a stroke in 2015, a pretty debilitating one, and he had a couple chap orders still on the bench and some people had paid for them already, so it's kind of where I actually started my own thing from that. I made those chaps for him, to help him fulfill that and keep that extra money," said Tolle.

Working with the chaps to help out her father, Tolle rediscovered a love for leather and began following a new passion. While her father focused on saddles, tack and boots in his shop, Tolle began branching out with her own leatherwork.

"Growing up, that's one thing I did kind of wish we did more of in his shop, was other stuff that's not solely horse, like bridles and saddles and stuff like that. I kind of like doing the backpacks I make and the chaps are fun. I like doing a little different stuff to push myself," Tolle said.

When she's finished with enough pieces, Tolle will post them to her Facebook page; backpacks, holsters, chaps, saddlebags and more. Following those posts, she'll usually see a few requests for orders come in. Enough to help out with a little extra money. Now that they're in Encampment, Tolle's husband works for the Silver Spur Ranch and she is able to be a stay-at-home mom.

Though she may be pursuing leatherwork that interests her, Tolle



Photo courtesy Toni Tolle

See 'A love of leather' on Ag page 6

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A love for leather... Continued from Ag page 5

still keeps her father's work alive by repairing saddles.

"I do have a couple of saddles to repair. Some of the stuff I'm pretty comfortable with, like it's normal everyday stuff. There's a couple other saddles that are a little more challenging for me," said Tolle.

Repairing a saddle is, mostly, a matter of preventative maintenance. She checks the fenders, where the rider's leg rests, which holds the stirrups and get a lot of weight

on them as a rider mounts and dismounts their horse.

"You want to make sure everything's safe. There's what you call the rigs. The deerings that hold the cinches on, they're held on with rigs," Tolle said. "That's usually something that is wore out and if that gets completely wore out, then your cinch can't be held on and you fall off. You just make sure everything's sound and safe."

Despite spending time in her father's shop growing

up and being able to repair a saddle, Tolle doesn't know how to make a saddle. Yet. She just recently applied for, and received, a fellowship from Art of the Cowgirl. Thanks to that fellowship, Tolle will be able to learn saddle making this summer from master saddle maker Nancy Martiny.

Tolle got her start in leatherwork by making chaps.



AG FACTS:

Wyoming has nearly 30.4 million acres of land used for farming and ranching

Source: Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation



Photo courtesy Pam Meyer

Ranch hand sings lessons learned

'Student of the cowboy' relays day-to-day life on the ranch

By Joshua Wood

The economics of ranching are, to put it simply, complex. Whether it's a ranch that's been family owned for over a century or an operation that spans hundreds, if not thousands, of acres, the issues faced are often the same. The health of cattle, the availability of food and the abundance, or lack thereof, of water are concerns shared by ranches of all sizes.

Because of the complexity of ranch economics, the life of a ranch hand is one filled with long hours and hard work. On the TA Ranch, north of Saratoga, Daron Little is one of those ranch hands, "I've always been fascinated with, and been a student of, the West. What I call 'the American Horseback Culture,'" said Little. "I study the Texas style of cowboying. I study New Mexico, California, Nevada. Usually, especially in Wyoming, in our area, it's an interesting place because it's a central location. We get a lot of Texas-style guys that come up in the summer. We get guys from the West Coast or the Great Basin, buckaroo style and it all kind of coagulates here."

Little, while originally from Louisiana, moved to the Platte Valley two decades ago. Since then, he has immersed himself into the world of ranch work and continued his education of the West. Being a ranch hand, Little's day-to-day will vary depending on the season. Right now, for example, his days are pretty slow as the TA waits, like the other ranches, for the water to begin flowing. Feeding the cows that the ranch has wintered is the biggest item on his list of things to do.

As the snow melts, however, Little's days are about to get busy as the TA begins to work on their irrigation systems. While most ranches are gearing up for calving season, which usually takes place



Photo courtesy Daron Little

Daron Little plays at the 2018 Grand Encampment Cowboy Gathering.

in March and April, the TA takes a different approach.

"We do some different things than most ranches in this area, in this region, do," Little said. "Most people will calf in March or April. We start calving in May, which allows us to focus on the irrigating, because that's when the water comes."

According to Little, the TA does not have any heifers, a young female that has not produced a calf, only mature cows.

"We let them be range cows and we lose a few because of that, but we just have a different philosophy of a mature range cow should be able to go out and have her own calf and take care of it and then, when they come in the fall, we look at all of them," said Little.

This approach to calving allows the ranch hands on the TA to focus on "chasing water" as they begin to work on irrigation. Driving along Wyoming Highways 130 and 230 during the early spring,

one may see backhoes ripping out willows that have grown along the banks of irrigation ditches. The TA is no different.

"I've gotten now to where I can run a backhoe just about as good as I can run a horse," Little said.

Willows are detrimental to an irrigation system. Not only do they drastically reduce the amount of water a ranch has to work with, but their expansive root systems can cause ditches to "trash up." Different kinds of debris will get stopped by the willows and cause the ditches to blow, allowing water to escape the banks of the ditch. That means the areas on the ranch that need water aren't getting it.

"They always say, in the West, 'cattle is king,' but really, really, water," said Little. "In our area, water is king because we can't do anything without it."

As the winter comes to an end and, with spring just around the corner, Little

thinks it will be a good year for water. When the water is plentiful, according to Little, the ranches get along and things are less tense than in low water years like last year.

"On a year where you don't have ample enough water, irrigation becomes more important, but it also becomes more time consuming because you only get it once," Little said. "It's a fleeting courtship. When the water comes, you better be ready, you better use it then because when it's gone, it's gone. You have to be ready, you have to be astute and you have to be ready to commit to irrigating. When the water's short, the hours are long. It's easy to irrigate when you got a lot of water."

Little admits that, in his younger years, he considered irrigating to be "farmer work." As he has gained more experience ranching and become more mature, he has realized the importance of irrigation and its important to a ranch.

"As I've become more mature and understand ranching and learn to enjoy ranching more, I understand how vital that is to the whole deal," said Little. "Some people will argue and say 'irrigation is the most important,' some people say cow health is the most important, some people say 'well you gotta be able to handle your cows good.' My experience is that it's all integral. You need to be good at all of it be successful."

With the amount of work a ranch hand has to do; irrigating, fixing fence, feeding cattle, etc., one might think there's time for little else. Along with his work at the TA, however, Little is also a singer/songwriter and has been invited to play at venues such as the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nev., the Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Alpine, Texas and will be attending the Western Heritage Clas-

sic Ranch Rodeo in Abilene, Texas.

Much of Little's day-to-day life influences his songwriting and, according to him, he gets a good reception when he plays for a crowd that is filled with other ranch hands.

"I may not do as good, monetarily, selling merchandise there, but that's my crowd. Working guys, ranching and cowboying, that live the life. That's who I write for," said Little.

Along with playing for the people he writes for, Little also has had the chance to play for those who are not all that familiar with the ranching lifestyle.

"What rang home to me is that, the urban public perception of ranchers and the ranching/ag community is that we are just simple people, and it varies from abusers of the land to caretakers of the land, and what people don't realize is that we are quite cerebral," Little said. "We study land stewardship, we study the environment. It astounds me every time that people think that we are out here to abuse the land because the land is what makes us our living and gives us our lifestyle. If you don't take care of the land, your cows will show it, your product will show it and pretty soon you'll be out of business. It's simple economics."

So, when Little is playing for an audience like that, he uses his music to help educate them on the realities of ranch living and let them know that ranchers have many of the same concerns about the environment as they do. For Little, it's important to show that ranches and ranchers are trying to take care of the land and take care of the environment because it is what affords them that lifestyle.

"The economics of ranching is pretty tough. You gotta work at it, but it's a good life. It's a worthwhile life," said Little.



Abuzz about agriculture

Busy bees make their own contribution to ag

By Joshua Wood

It is no accident that we use the term “busy as a bee” when talking about how active and hard working someone is. Bees are, and have been, one of the hardest working and most efficient pollinators in the animal world. A well-known byproduct of their pollination efforts is, of course, honey. According to the National Honey Board (NHB), honey production in 2013 was nearly 149 million pounds in the United States and the NHB puts annual honey consumption in the U.S. at 450 million pounds.

Wyoming, however, is not what one would call a hub of honey production, mainly due to the fact that the Cowboy State does not have a lot of crops that are dependent upon insect pollination. Commercial beekeepers, however, do call Wyoming home and will supply bees for various pollination seasons in surrounding states for fruit and nut crops. Many commercial crops, in fact, depend upon the efficient pollination of bees including: apples, melons, onions, cucumbers, avocados and almonds.

To get the buzz on bees in Wyoming, the *Saratoga Sun* reached out to Scott Schell, Extension Entomology Specialist for the University of Wyoming Extension Office. Schell’s main role in the UW Extension Office is to help with insect or arthropod diagnostics, where he works with the public to determine the species of a particular insect and give advice on how to deal with it if it is a pest.

“In Wyoming, there’s probably small producers that are relying somewhat on honey bees. We do produce quite a bit of alfalfa seed up in the Bighorn Basin, but they don’t use European honey bees for that. The alfalfa leafcutter bee is superior to the European honey bee for getting the seed set on alfalfa, so that’s what

they use there,” said Schell.

Like the honey bee, the alfalfa leafcutter bee was introduced from Europe. That is where the similarities end. The leafcutter bee is not social, like the honey bee, so you won’t find it sharing a hive with other leafcutter bees. Homes for these bees are often sections of plywood with several holes drilled into them to allow a place for the bees to lay their eggs.

“The leafcutter bees, they pollinate the alfalfa, gather the pollen and nectar and make a ball and then they cut leaves and stick it in those holes and provision that with the ball of pollen and nectar and the females lay an egg on it and seal it up. Then, that egg hatches and the larva develops on that provision of pollen and nectar,” Schell said.

Leafcutter bees can set 15 times more alfalfa seed than their native counterparts and 10 times more seed than the European honey bee. It is because of this efficiency that the leafcutter bee is used in the Bighorn Basin and other alfalfa operations, though there is a native bee that does similar work.

Alkali bees, a ground dwelling bee native to Wyoming and the west, are also well-known pollinators of alfalfa. Much like their name suggests, these bees are fond of areas with salty soil. While not widely used in Wyoming, alkali bees are used in states such as Utah and Washington. In fact, alfalfa growers received significant help from these bees for years without realizing it until they began expanding their alfalfa fields and using pesticides.

When the production of alfalfa dropped because of those two factors, growers began working on creating conditions favorable to the alkali bee. In one place in Washington state, alfalfa and bees are farmed, literally, side by side.

“Walla Walla County in Washington state might just be the only place on Earth where you have to brake for bees,” began a July 9, 2018 article from National Public Radio, “Native Bees and Alfalfa Farmers - A Seed Love Story.” In Washington state, one will find patches of what appear to be barren patches of ground surrounded by fields of alfalfa. A closer look shows that they are, instead, bee beds that have been started to allow a place for the alkali bees to nest.

With more than 20 species in Wyoming, the bumblebee is another native and one that is far easier to spot with its fuzzy body and bright colors. More adapted to the climate, the bumblebee can be seen out pollinating when the temperature is below 50 degrees while the European honey bee prefers the warmer weather.

Bumble bees are often used in commercial operations for the pollination of plants that are also native to the area, like the plants in the nightshade family which includes potatoes, tomatoes and peppers. Like other native species to Wyoming, the bumblebee dwells in the ground, often in abandoned burrows or under bunch grass. Whereas most native bees are solitary, or semi-solitary, the bumblebee is a social species that establish hives, much smaller than those of honey bees.

All of this is not to say that the European honey bee doesn’t have importance in Wyoming. The honey bee is still an efficient pollinator and, in combination with native bees, make more seeds when it comes to pollinating crops. Even though Wyoming may not be huge on the production of honey, at least on the commercial level, hobby beekeepers have their own role to play on the local level.

“Certainly, having beekeep-

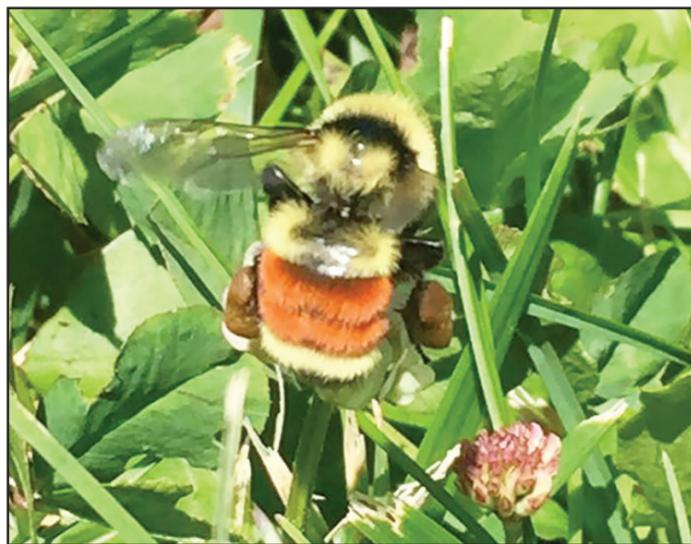


Photo courtesy Telitha Bergeson

A bumblebee looks for nectar during a warm summer day.

ers, hobby beekeepers, that practice good husbandry ... they can help. If they maintain their colonies in a healthy state, they can help by providing pollination services within towns. Many people might have fruit trees that need pollination and also garden plants. Hobby beekeepers can provide pollination services locally, if they’re doing it well,” said Schell.

Amateur apiarians, of course, have their struggles. Over the last several years, both commercial and hobby beekeepers have had to deal with colony collapse disorder. While the exact cause of the disorder is still not known, some fingers have been pointed at the varroa mite—a parasite of the Asian honey bee. When the Asian honey bee was introduced into the United States, the mite hitched a ride.

Due to the fact that the European honey bee did not evolve with the varroa mite, it has no defenses against the parasitic insect.

“They also are a known vector of all the major bee diseases and they are probably the major reason why a lot of beekeepers have had major losses,” Schell said. “The major

ways that beekeepers can combat the varroa mites is to treat the bees with a sub-lethal dose of an insecticide that will kill the mites but not kill the bees.”

According to Schell, many different insecticides have been used in the past, but the current one being used is tau-fluvalinate. With the help of management, it is likely that “domesticated” honey bee populations will not succumb to colony collapse disorder, though “feral” honey bee populations are still susceptible.

Not everyone, though, is up to the task of beekeeping, but may still be concerned about the status of both honey bees and Wyoming’s native bees.

“Many times, people have a concern for what’s going in the natural world and if they want to help bees, European honey bees or other native pollinators, they can do so by planting plants that provide season long flowers,” said Schell.

When we belly up to the dinner table, it is not uncommon in this area to think of the hard working men and women who made that dinner possible. It’s not a bad idea to do the same for the busy bees who make their own contributions to agriculture.

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HATS OFF TO AG

Agricultural education changes lives in schools and communities

By Lindsey Freeman

As a Career and Technical Education teacher at HEM Jr./Sr. High School I often find myself asking what students are planning to do after high school graduation. "I'm just going back to the ranch," one student answered. I promptly reprimanded the student for considering pursuits in production agriculture an option of dishonor. Students should be proud to be involved in the agricultural industry and agricultural courses strive to support those pursuits.

Realms of Participation

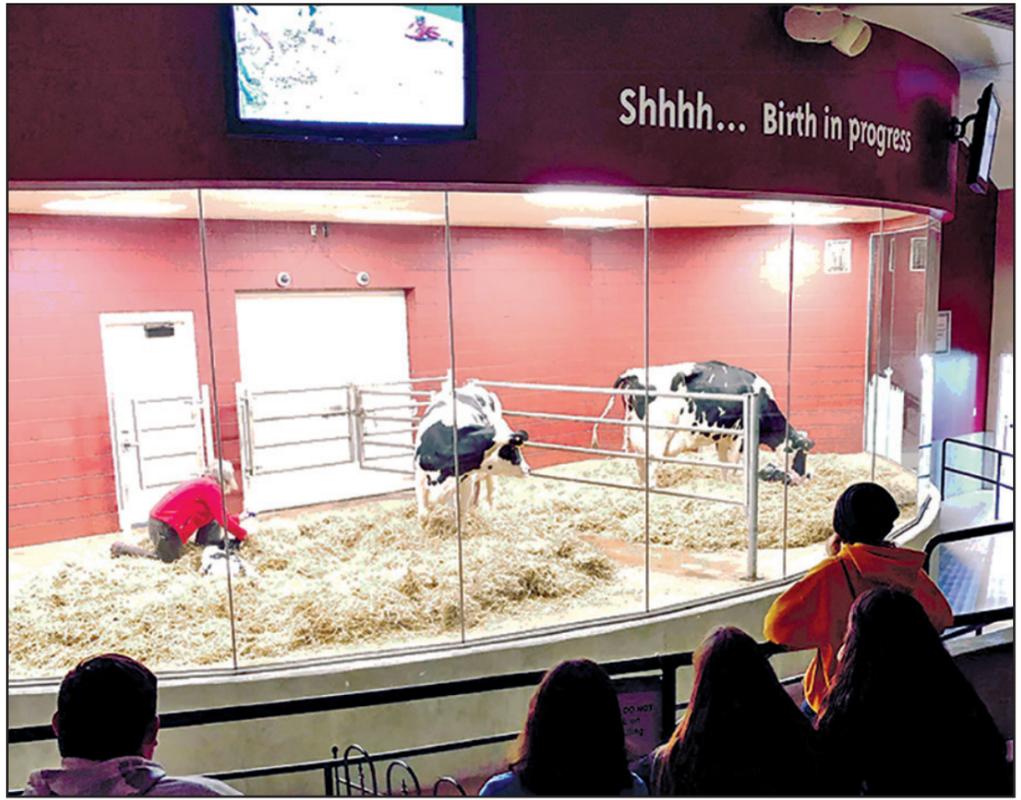
Participation in agricultural education goes far beyond the four walls of the school and involves experience in three realms: classroom learning, Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE), and FFA. These components each work in synergy with the others to generate the whole agricultural education experience and each would not be successful without the others. The primary goal of this "three-circle model" is to prepare students for careers in the industry through practical experience in high school.

Work-Based Learning

Supervised Agriculture Experiences or SAE's are individual student work-based learning projects. Students can initiate a project in Entrepreneurship, Placement (a job in the community), Foundational (job shadowing), or Agriscience Research. Throughout these experiences students are required to keep a record of their efforts through financial or time-based records. At the culmination of a project students have the opportunity to earn proficiency awards or degree recognition through FFA participation.

Career Development

But FFA participation provides many other career development opportunities. Each year students participate in Career Development Event contests at the state level. This gives them the chance to put their knowledge to the test against their peers from around the state. The real value of these events can be found in the learning that occurs in preparing for the contests. The local FFA program also strives to be a light in the community providing services for citizens,



The birthing chamber at Fair Oaks Farms in Fair Oaks, Ind. was one of the trips the Hanna FFA students went to when they went to Nationals in Indianapolis.

agricultural literacy for children, and personal growth opportunities for students.

School to Community

Agricultural Education and FFA are school-based programs yet they reach every corner of the community. SAE projects contribute to the economy and prepare students to fill industrial needs in the community. FFA experiences take students out of the community to gain perspective and return to serve their home with a new focus. Agriculture classes help students discover that the world is vast beyond their community. Agricultural Education is a powerful resource for community development and its presence in schools is

essential for student growth.

Personal Growth

Beyond what agricultural education and FFA can do for a community, this teacher is in awe of what it has done for individual students. Shy seventh graders become assertive high school leaders. Apathetic kids become motivated, critical thinking young adults. Lonely teenagers become a part of a family. Public speaking, decision making, and interpersonal growth are often overlooked as byproducts of FFA participation, but it is the development of those skills in my students that gives me hope for a better tomorrow.

Have a conversation with an FFA member or alumni about their experience with this life changing organization. I am sure they will not be able to express its immeasurable influence in words. So instead, get involved! Contact your local FFA advisor, volunteer funding, time, or expertise. Work alongside students, teachers, agriculturalists and other community partners to get a glimpse of the impact agricultural education has on all who are connected to its pursuits. FFA members believe "in the future of agriculture with a faith born not of words but of deeds," (The FFA Creed) so join us in taking action make the world around us a better place to live and work.

Find Out



Photos courtesy Lindsey Freeman

From left, Tlyssa Solaas and Jolynn Borah show off their project in Indianapolis.

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HATS OFF TO AG



Calving calls

Veterinarian recounts tough situations during calving season

By Mike Armstrong

Ranchers will tell you this time of year is calving season. Most of the births happen without having to get a veterinarian involved, but sometimes it is necessary to get help and Carbon County has a vet ready to help.

Warner McFarland has been a veterinarian in Carbon County for over 20 years.

He attended Carroll College in Helena, Mont. where he earned his B.S. in Biology. In 1993 he graduated from Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. McFarland holds licenses to practice veterinary medicine in Wyoming and Colorado. After veterinary school, and a quick time as a vet in Bozeman, Mont., in 1994 he joined the Rawlins Veterinary Clinic as an associate.

In 1995, he and his wife, Amy, purchased the practice and have been helping Carbon County residents with their animals ever since.

McFarland said most ranchers call him to get his take if there is difficult birth on the horizon, but don't actually make him come out.

McFarland said, traditionally, mid-March is the ideal time for calving because the day length starts to get longer, the weather warmer (at least it is hoped) and that

means green grass will soon be springing forth.

"It is sort of what the industry leans to," McFarland said. "You calve in the spring and sell in the fall."

He said that living in Carbon County afforded him clients that are proficient at calving out.

"The only time we get called is when there is some sort of a problem that is referred to as dystocia," McFarland said. "It refers to an animal having a difficult birth."

He said sometimes it requires a C-section to get a calf out. Other examples are a twisted uterus that the vet untwists, or a breach birth that has the calf coming out tail first.

In a breach birth, the calf is manipulated to come out the correct way.

"Once calving season gets rolling, I will get 12 to 20 phone calls a week," McFarland said. "But as far as actually having to go out to a ranch, it varies year to year, but as calving gets into full swing, we might perform, on average, three to four C-sections a week."

He said it can be more intense

"There have been instances where I am doing three to four C-sections a day," McFarland said.

The vet said when he did

go out on call to do a C-section, the animal was usually in a stall standing up.

"They are in the cow chute and we do an epidural and then we do a line block so that you make a straight line down where you know you are going to make your incision on the abdominal wall which is on the left," McFarland said. "And once we make our incision into the abdominal cavity, we reach in and grab the leg of the calf in the uterus and pull it up, make an incision in the uterus, take the calf out and then sew everything back up."

He said occasionally an animal is out in the field and he must improvise.

"There is always that situation that sticks out in your mind," McFarland said. "The ones that are out in the field are a bit more challenging. There have been occasions that I have been in a snowstorm and I have the cow lying on its side with its legs literally tied to bumpers of trucks that are out there with me."

He said it gets tough doing the C-section by truck light or by a flashlight.

"It is always gratifying when you get a live calf out of those situations," McFarland said. "There have been times when I thought, 'this will never work and the heifer



Saratoga Sun file photo

A calf suckles at her mother's teat in the foreground of this Valley photo.

er is going to get an infection in there,' but given a little time and some antibiotics, they do pretty well."

McFarland said wind can also be a problem. He remembers being at a ranch where the heifer was in a sheep corral. A heifer is a female animal that has never had a calf. Once a heifer has a calf, she becomes a cow.

"We had her tied down and the wind was just howling and dung was flying everywhere," McFarland said. "We did the C-section and dung was getting on the

uterus. I kept flushing it out as best as I could, but I really thought it was going to die. It was gratifying when I found out she lived."

McFarland summed up his appreciation of calving season.

"It is always a lot of fun when calving, lambing and kidding really gets started, because it is really a lot of fun to have all these little babies running around," McFarland said. "But by the time we get to the end of the season, we are glad its over."

Locally sourced ... Continued from Ag page 3

only restaurant member in the program listed.

"I think what it boils down to is a conversation between what a rancher and our restaurant is trying to accomplish that is mutually beneficial to both," Burau said. "It has to be economically feasible for both."

He said what Firewater is doing with trying to source local product is in uncharted territory.

"But they say necessity is the mother of invention," Burau said. "It is a necessity to me that we try and find local ingredients when we can."

He said knowing the ingredients as best as possible was important to his concept for Firewater.

"This is why we make things from scratch here," Burau said. "Because we can speak to the ingredients and control what we serve. I could go and touch the nose of the cattle we bought and that is hard for any restaurant to say no matter you are located."

He said local vegetables and fruit is easier to bring into Firewater as long as the produce is directly off the plant. It can't be sliced,

peeled or cut in any manner.

"We can take produce from a local garden as long as it is not processed," Burau said. "This way you are not risking introducing contaminants."

He said currently he has been getting greens from Brush Creek Ranch that is grown in the greenhouse.

"The iceberg lettuce they have brought in has been beautiful," Burau said. "The taste is the best I have ever had."

He said the simplicity of getting fresh produce from local gardens excites him.

"If we can find the people

who are growing what we want, it is excellent," Burau said. "I guess I would say getting local produce versus local protein is a whole other animal."

Burau said if he can assist in serving local beef and produce to the community, it will be satisfying.

"I feel better about what we are putting on the plate," Burau said. "I know it is more expensive, but to me, to help support the local growers, it is worth it."

He said there is a trade off of trying to keep prices down because economies of scale

make it hard. A big industrial producer can buy bulk grain whereas a smaller producer does not get these lower prices. They have to pass the heftier price to the purchasers, such as Firewater.

Burau is up to the challenge.

"We moved here to be a part of the community and that means supporting the local producers in the best manner we can, because it translates to helping our customers get the best taste we can put forth," Burau said. "That is key to Firewater."

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Where's the beef?

These are just a few of the items beef and beef byproducts go into that you probably use every day

SPORTS

- Footballs
- Basketballs
- Baseballs
- Baseball gloves
- Soccer balls
- Volleyballs
- MORE

INDUSTRIAL

- Lubricants
- Explosives
- Pesticides
- Floatation agents
- Fertilizer
- Sandpaper
- MORE

EDIBLES

- 650 pounds of meat per 1200 pound market steer
- Candy
- Margarine
- Chewing Gum
- Marshmallows
- Ice Cream
- Gelatin
- MORE

AUTOMOTIVE

- Oil
- Tires
- Upholstery
- MORE

CLOTHING

- Jackets
- Footwear
- MORE

HOUSEHOLD

- Biodegradable detergents
- Buttons
- Glues
- Wallpaper
- Papers
- "Camel hair" brushes
- MORE

HEALTH & BEAUTY

- Lipstick
- Face Creams
- Toothbrushes
- MORE

MEDICAL

- Insulin
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 - Prevent blood clots
 - Help babies digest milk
 - Relieve asthma
- MORE

This info brought to you by the Snowy Range Cattlewomen.