

Beef & Cattlemen's Edition

Presented by The Torrington Telegram, The Lingle Guide,
The Lusk Herald, The Platte County Record-Times,
The Guernsey Gazette and The Business Farmer

May 18, 19 & 21, 2021



LOGAN DAILEY/WYOMING NEWSPAPER, INC.

Cattlemen and cattlemen herd cattle before branding calves at the Petsch & Rollins Ranch on Sunday, May 2.

The Petsch & Rollins Ranch

'A large Wyoming ranch with reputation cattle'

BY LOGAN DAILEY

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GOSHEN COUNTY – On Sunday, May 2, cowboys and cowgirls from the eastern Wyoming area convened at the Petsch & Rollins Ranch in Goshen County for the ranches' spring branding. Calves were branded and vaccinated throughout the morning by the mostly volunteer crew of cattlemen and cattlemen.

Though the branding went off

without a hitch, the morning started out unique for ranch Foreman Pat Fleming.

Fleming went out shortly after daybreak to check on the cattle. He began driving down the road when, about 50 yards from their house, he spotted something black lying alongside the road. Assuming it was a calf, he continued approaching the animal.

"It got up, stood on the road and

stood up on two feet," he said.

Shocked by what he was seeing, Fleming watched as the animal took off running. At that point, Fleming realized that he had just witnessed a small bear on the ranch.

Fleming said he had never seen a bear on the ranch at any point in his time there. Despite the unexpected encounter, the day progressed and so did the branding.

Going back to the beginning, the

Petsch & Rollins Ranch is nestled in the gently rolling hills about 17 miles north of Lingle. Though the ranch is in Wyoming, the Petsch & Rollins Ranch story actually begins in Nebraska with a man named Fred Petsch.

Petsch came from Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska where he operated the sale barn in Scottsbluff, Ne-

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Ranch:

FROM PAGE 1

braska. He later purchased the sale barn in Torrington, helped establish the "south barn" and served as an auctioneer. The Torrington Livestock Commission was built in 1934, under his direction.

According to the Torrington Livestock Commission's website, "The "south barn," Stockman Livestock Auction, was operated seasonally. Special calf, bred cow and pair sales were held there. As of April 2009, the McClun Bull sale was the last cattle sale held. The facility is now used for Madden Bros Consignment sales."

Petsch also owned and operated Petsch ranches in Meridan. Petsch and his wife

had a daughter, Geraldine, who married Lester Rollins.

Lester had traveled to Eastern Wyoming from Missouri in an attempt to escape the draft. When he got to Torrington, he went to the sale barn and said he was looking for a job. Lester was told to have a seat in a particular pickup, and he would be hired.

Despite Fred's initial hesitation, Fred told Lester he was hard to work for.

Lester responded, "I'm a hard worker," and the rest is history.

Geraldine and Lester met at the ranch, married and later had a single daughter, Kathie (Rollins) France.

When France was 13, Fred and the family moved to

their current location north of Lingle. France has lived at the ranch for the past 55 years and is the current owner of the Petsch & Rollins Ranch.

Though France spent much of her life on the family's ranch, she spent some time at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics and computer science, and later with a master's degree in public administration.

After college, France worked for Eastern Wyoming College (EWC) for 29 years. While at EWC, she served as the director of the computer center and as the director of institutional research.

Then, in 1990, France's parents passed away. She was only 37 years old at the time. In 1993, France's husband decided he wanted a divorce and the two separated.

"We went through a long court battle over this ranch," she said. "And I ended up with it."

After the divorce, France found herself a single mother caring for her daughter, Adeena, working full-time at EWC, working on her master's degree and now managing a fully operational ranch.

France began the search for a ranch foreman to operate her ranch and she found the right man for the job working at her cousin's ranch, Petsch Ranch, in Meridan. That man was Fleming.

"Pat was working for my cousins at Petsch Ranches in Meridan, and that's how he came here," she said. "He is the one that really knows the cattle. My background is more business-sided."



LOGAN DAILEY/WYOMING NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Petsch & Rollins Ranch foreman Pat Fleming watches over the ranch's branding held on Sunday, May 2.

France expressed she is deeply grateful for the Fleming family and their years of service to the ranch. She said Pat, his wife, Shannon, and their children, Hayden, Hadley and Haylee, have all pitched in to help make the ranch operations run smoothly.

France said she occasionally hires others to come out and work, but most of the day-to-day work is done by Pat and traded help from area ranches.

Petsch & Rollins boasts true F1 Cross heifers, meaning they are the first offspring of crossbred cattle. In addition to F1 heifers, Petsch & Rollins also operates a closed herd, meaning

the herd will have no contact with other livestock, and all replacement cattle are raised right at the ranch.

Though France and the Flemings run a successful ranch, France worries about this year's drought and the state of the cattle industry.

"The last two years, we have lost the whole cuttings of Alfalfa," she said. "This is probably the worst drought I have seen in my lifetime."

Though nothing much can be done about the drought, France also finds attempts by environmentalists to shut down the cattle industry, a primary concern for all ranchers and agriculturists.

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Building M Lazy Heart

The expansion of a dream into three family businesses

BY ALICIA LOUTERS

alouters@torringtontelegram.com

TORRINGTON – When most people think of M Lazy Heart, they probably just think of cattle, according to co-owner Christine Miller.

What started as a dream of raising show cattle has now expanded into M Lazy Heart Ranch, Miller Cattle & Feedyards and M Lazy Heart feedstore.

Miller said all three businesses have the same focus – to provide customers with an outstanding product and great customer service at a reasonable cost.

“We’ve built something we can be proud of, and we’ve done it as a family,” she said.

Family has been a major focus for Paul and Christine Miller, each member having their own area of focus.

Leaving the family business

The dream for M Lazy Heart Ranch started on the east coast. Miller said both she and Paul grew up with backgrounds in the cattle business. Paul grew up with beef cattle and showing charolais cattle. Miller said she grew up on a dairy farm.

The two met at Pennsylvania State University, while Miller pursued a degree to teach agriculture and Paul studied civil engineering, to enter his family business.

While out east, Miller taught ag classes and Paul worked for his family’s construction company, the two

having 50 head of cattle as a side business.

Miller said as Paul’s family’s company was moving into the third generation, they decided to leave the family business.

“We decided we wanted to branch out on our own, and we headed west,” she said.

Land prices made it difficult to get into agriculture in Pennsylvania, Miller said.

Though the family almost moved to Texas, they ended up deciding on Torrington. Prior to moving, the Millers had made some connections to the area. Miller said Paul and his family had sent bulls (the ones not good enough to be show bulls) to Bill Shain in Torrington.

Since feeder cattle were cheaper on the east coast than here, Miller said, they had been sending them to be sold by partners in Torrington.

Following this, Miller said the market changed and they started putting their feeder cattle in a feedyard in Torrington – the one they ended up purchasing later.

“It was kind of funny too, because we did come to this area and buy some Maine-Anjou genetics to start to start our show cattle herd,” Miller said.

Miller Cattle & Feedyards was purchased in 1997. Two years later, the Millers moved to Torrington.

“It’s because my husband’s dream was to raise show cattle that we moved to Wyoming,” Miller said.

The couple started Miller Cattle



ALICIA LOUTERS/WYOMING NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Miller Cattle & Feedyards was Paul and Christine Miller’s first business in Torrington. The feedyard headquarters shares a building with M Lazy Heart Feedstore, which opened in 2019.

& Feedyards as the means to later make that dream possible. Miller said she is thankful for how the family was embraced by the community.

Currently, Miller said the focus has been getting ready for shipping.

“We’ll fill up in October and then from May to the middle of July, we’ll ship 6,000 head out of here,” she said.

Since this was the first business they had in the community, Miller said often people recognize the Miller name more than the M Lazy Heart brand.

M Lazy Heart

Though the dream of raising show cattle remained, Miller said she and Paul initially bought the feedlot “as a

means to an end.”

M Lazy Heart Ranch is the Millers’ show cattle operation. The ranch gets its name from the family’s brand. Coming from Pennsylvania, they did not have a brand. Miller said the M Lazy Heart brand was bought in 2008.

“Although the name didn’t come until 2008, we’d been building the genetics, I’d say, since 1992,” Miller said.

This spring, since being done with calving and branding, Miller said the next focus is breeding. The ranch is preparing for oocyte harvest and embryo transfer.

See M LAZY HEART page 4

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M Lazy Heart:

FROM PAGE 3

“It’s a really big job to get the recipient cows set up, so we’re putting in CIDRs and timing ovulation for donors,” Miller said.

Miller said this time of year also includes preparing for shows.

According to Miller, raising show cattle involves more labor and expense than a commercial operation.

Calving is often more of

a challenge because of the build of club calves.

“In club calf genetics, some are known for small pelvic size,” Miller said.

In the spring, they breed about 350 cows.

“We’ll probably do 10 to 15 C-sections a year,” she explained.

M Lazy Heart also works to breed around defects.

“There are some genetic defects in every breed, but with show cattle, we know what they are and breed around

that,” said Miller.

Out of about 350 brew cows, the ranch typically ends up with 80 to 90 show calves, according to Miller. These calves are sold from September to February to people all across the U.S. and Canada. Miller said about 10% or fewer stay in Wyoming.

Last month, M Lazy Heart Ranch became a satellite location for Trans Ova Genetics. Miller said they had been using the Iowa-based company for their in vitro fertilization (IVF).

“Trans Ova is the most well-known. They’ve been doing it the longest,” said Miller. Since Trans Ova has several clients in the area, they approached the Millers about using their ranch, to make their services more accessible.

“We provide the place and little chute-side help,” said Miller. During spring months, there will be two service days a month. Miller said April 13 was their first day and there has been an average of 30 cows signed up for each day.

A natural expansion

Miller said the family had never intended to have a storefront, but in March of 2019, they opened the M Lazy Heart Feedstore.

Previously, Miller said they were mainly self-use, but sold feed to a few others. The Millers became ADM Animal Nutrition dealers in 2017.

“ADM is the basis of what we sell here. We also have our own branded show feeds that we have made and mixed to our specifications,” said Miller.

In 2018, the Millers bought a new property closer to their feedyard and started

building their feed mill. On that property was a former sale barn – a building with potential to become a storefront.

“People that wanted products and people that wanted advice on feeding just kept coming to us and it kept growing,” Miller said. A unique quality of M Lazy Heart Feedstore is education. Miller said the focus is helping people make the right choices for their livestock, within their budget.

Miller said the feedstore has the most potential for growth. Growth has been driven by customer need, and Miller said a big project is currently in the works. Though the project has not been publicly revealed yet, Miller said she thinks it will be “something very good for the community and the state of Wyoming.”

Family focus

“It’s been very fulfilling to do it as a family,” Miller said. “Our children have been very involved, and that’s one of the reasons we’re expanding.”

Both of Miller’s sons, PD and Skyler have committed to working with them. She is not sure what Paige will choose to do.

Miller noted that she and Paul followed another dream after not wanting to be in a family business. Because of this, Miller finds it important for each family member to have their own defined role and focus.

Miller said her work is similar to that of a CFO, handling the business’ finances.

“I spend most of my time in my dungeon,” Miller joked, about the office she shares with Paul and PD.



ALICIA LOUTERS/WYOMING NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Christine Miller said her current responsibilities at M Lazy Heart Ranch, Miller Cattle & Feedyards and M Lazy Heart Feedstore are similar to those of a CFO.

“To keep everyone going, I stay pretty busy,” Miller said. Miller hopes to be able to spend a little more time in other areas of the business if she can find the right person to take on some of her duties.

While their feedyard manager, Casey Greiman, takes care of the day-to-day operations, Paul focuses more on the big ideas and customer relations, according to Miller.

“As a custom feed feedyard, customer relations is a pretty big piece,” she explained.

With the M Lazy Heart Ranch, he has taken on a consulting role with PD.

Miller said Paul is very active with the feedstore.

“He’s the guy that if nobody knows the answer, they call him,” Miller said.

The Millers’ oldest son, PD graduated from Oklahoma State University in 2019. Since moving home, Miller said he has been managing the M Lazy Heart Ranch show cattle.

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Ranch:

FROM PAGE 2

“There’s a big concern (in the cattle industry) because the environmentalists and some of the big corporations want to put the family ranches out of business; they want to take us out,” she said.

There is also the concern of big corporations pushing “impossible” foods. These “impossible” foods are all plant based and are being produced with the intention of removing meat from the market.

“They’re trying to get the country, the people, to eat lab grown meat instead of what God gave

us,” she said. “We need good quality protein.”

Another facet of this issue is the monopolizing of packing plants and “COOL,” or country of origin labeling.

France recounted hearing instances of ranchers who had “fats,” or cattle who were to be processed for food, who were ready to go to the butcher, but after COVID shut the packing plants down, they were unable to do anything with the cattle. She said some ranchers even had to put down the cattle.

“The industry needs more packers; more mom-and-pop packing plants,” she said.

France also discussed the issue of COOL.

“The consumer should have the right to know where that product is coming from,” she said.

With today’s legislation, beef can be labeled as coming from the United States when in fact the beef originated in another country, but was processed in the U.S.

“Congress needs to pass country of origin labeling,” she said. “Our standards are much higher, and we get a much better product than what is coming from overseas.”

France is very passionate about these matters and hopes local and federal does what is right by the people of the ranching and agriculture communities.



LOGAN DAILEY/WYOMING NEWSPAPER, INC.

A pair of cattle dogs help the cowboys and cowgirls to keep the mother cows separated from their calves during the branding at the Petsch & Rollins Ranch on Sunday, May 2.

M Lazy Heart:

FROM PAGE 4

“He’s doing a great job there,” Miller said. “We were so busy and spread out, so it’s nice to have him know that he’s focusing on that part of the business.”

Miller said they have added a bred heifer sale and become a Trans Ova facility, since PD started managing.

Skyler graduated from the University of Wyoming and recently finished his last season with the football team, said Miller. Since completing pro day, Miller said he is waiting to hear from the NFL.

Miller said Skyler’s dream to continue playing football would not change his career path, just when it might start.

“I think that his role will be in feedlot customer service and feed formulation and customer sales in the feedstore,” Miller said.

She said this is because of his interest in animal nutrition.

Paige, the youngest Miller sibling, graduated on May 14 from Butler Community College in Kansas. Miller said she plans to continue her

education at Colorado State University.

On whether or not Paige would return to the family ranch, Miller said, “I’m not sure what Paige will choose.”

Wanting hardworking employees they can trust, Miller said they have recruited many of the people they work with.

According to Miller, a total of 12 people run the three locations, some working at multiple.

The ranch runs off of two full time employees, with others pitching in to help prep for shows.

The feedstore has two employees, one being Janel Greiman, who is married to Casey.

“Casey and Janel moved here from Colorado a couple of years ago and then their son, Lane is also a cowboy in the yard, so their family has kind of come in with us,” Miller said.

All other employees work at the feedyard, or float between multiple locations.

A challenge for Miller has been managing her time and scaling the business as it grows. Miller said she and Paul are at the point of needing to hire more employees, provided they can find the right people.



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Youth ages 8 to 18 are invited to learn more about livestock judging at the 2021 Standard of Excellence Livestock Judging Camp at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA).

NCTA Livestock Team members and coach Dr. Doug Smith will conduct the camp on May 26, with participants encouraged to also participate in the Animal Science Discovery Day on May 27.

Participants may stay overnight at an NCTA Residence Hall on Wednesday evening, said Dr. Smith.

The tentative schedule is check in at 10 a.m., following by team introductions at the Livestock

Teaching Center at 11 a.m. After lunch, topics include how to give oral reasons, followed by evaluation of sheep and goats, swine, and cattle.

A 6 p.m. dinner will be followed by the judging contest at 7 p.m. with oral reasons at 8 p.m. Other evening activities include results, games and “lights out” by midnight.

Nebraska Extension’s Animal Science Discovery Day begins May 27 with registration after a breakfast in Aggie Dining from 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Registration cost for the Judging Camp is \$100 with two meals and no overnight stay, or \$125 for camp, double occupancy and three meals, or \$150 camp, single occupancy and three meals.

An online form is at: <https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSfqVfKVBjEHyk.../viewform>.

For additional information, contact Dr. Smith at doug.smith@unl.edu, 308-367-5286-office or 281-415-5271-mobile.

In addition to May 27 at NCTA, the Animal Science Discovery Day also will be held June 9 at the Boone County Fairgrounds in Albion. A \$10 fee includes lunch. Register online at: <https://cvent.me/WY8DxL>.



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Fire and drought

Can't stop this century-old operation

BY ANNA TEGHMEYER
Contributing Writer

HARRISBURG – Going out every morning to work cattle, bringing calves in from the storm, fighting range fires, and spending all day on horseback sounds like a tv western movie. For local rancher Paula Brown, it's something she does every day.

Brown's family has been raising cattle on their property since 1917 and have added acreage since the original establishment of the ranch. "My family bought it in 1917 when my grandpa was very young, so it's been in our family for one hundred and four years," said Brown. "My grandparents had the land in the 70s and 80s. My dad and mom, they added onto the land in the 70s and 80s and 90s."

Paula also noted that she did not know the age of one of her barns as some of the buildings were already established when the family purchased the farm. Those buildings are still in use today.

Initially, the Brown family raised Herford cattle. Brown said, "It started off being Herfords. And then when my dad took over, he changed it to Black Angus." In addition, the Browns raise horses and their own oats.

The Browns run close to 200 pairs and take in up to 1000 head of yearlings depending upon the year. They calve and sell the cattle around April each year. Up until this year, Brown also fed out yearlings for other ranchers as well. "We're not going to do that for two years due to the fire because we're going to let our land come back.," said Brown.

Brown loves what she does and admits that every day is different. "I do barn chores first and then check cattle, make sure everything's running. And then we're also planting oats, so I get dad going and make sure his drill is filled and tractors filled and all that," said Brown. Brown also mentioned that she spends some of her time taking care of fencing and taking tractors to the repair shops.

The Brown operation is commercial and likes to pasture-raise their cattle along with a mixture of grain, hay, and grass. "It's a fine line, but we believe more natural is better," said Brown. The cattle also eat the oats produced right there at the ranch.

Ranching is not without its challenges. In August 2020, a fire burning more than 4,000 acres across Banner County threatened to destroy the family ranch. Although most of the buildings and their cattle were spared, the effects are still showing through. "You don't ever really estimate the effects of the fire. They last for years and we're seeing that in our calving process and the stress of the fire, even though we got the cattle out before the fire, it really got to them. There's still a lot of stress there," said Brown. Brown mentioned that the stress has caused some of the mothers to lose their babies. Snowstorms and lightning strikes have also been causes of loss for the ranch.

Drought has also been



ANNA TEGHMEYER/SPECIAL TO WYOMING NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Paula Brown and Koni pose with the Brown's Angus Ranch sign at the entrance to the family ranch.

a major player for Brown. "With the drought, our grasses haven't been nourishable and even though we're keeping mineral in front of the cattle, there's still some lacking. We're seeing big vita-

min A and E deficiencies. So, we're changing up the mineral program and going with mineral ISO, Vitalize and VitaFerm. We're going to throw

See Brown page 8

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Brown:

FROM PAGE 7

that on top of them and see if we can build back up the vitamin A and E," said Brown. "I'm noticing everybody is in this drought. This drought is something fierce, which we all know it is. But to see it with your own eyes is something."

The dry weather has also caused the flourishing of bug populations as well. A roller coaster like market has also contributed to the stress of ranching.

One of the joys for Brown is nursing calves back to health when they get hurt. She also enjoys working with her right-hand girl, seven-year-old Koni, the Texas Heeler. Brown said, "She's a cow dog. She

moves everything. And when I'm on my horse, I can send her away and bring in cattle or if I'm a foot, I send her. She knows her job. And she works." Brown mentioned that Koni never takes a day off, loves music, and goes virtually everywhere with her.

Outside of raising cattle, Brown is a breakaway roper and is a part of the Saddle Club. "I help out the Saddle Club and try to bring in good clinicians so we can start good roping programs around here and equine programs," said Brown, "We're having goat tying happening this year." She also enjoys gardening, canning, and making her own jellies.

Despite all of the challenges, Brown loves her way of life and has a positive outlook for the future.



ANNA TEGHTMEYER/SPECIAL TO WYOMING NEWSPAPERS, INC.

A curious, weeks-old calf strikes a pose for the camera at the Brown Ranch.

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