

SPRING 2016

 MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

# Spokesman

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# Spokesman

**MONTANA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION**

**WE CARE FOR THE COUNTRY**

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**ON THE COVER:** Shane and Kellee Hooker are back on Shane's family ranch in Ryegate raising cattle, hay and sheep.  
*Photo by Rebecca Colnar*

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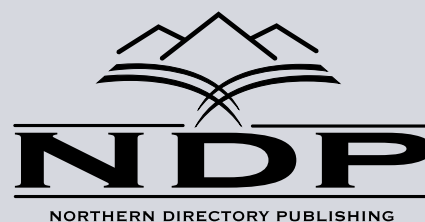
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**Bob Hanson**

President, Montana Farm Bureau Federation

“Over the past 18 months, the Board of Livestock (BOL) has been forced to make several difficult decisions regarding personnel and spending.”

# A time of change at the Department of Livestock

The Department of Livestock (DOL) has been in the news a great deal in recent months. There have been newspaper articles highlighting the problems in the department, letters from legislators, and much talk in sale yards and local cafes on what is wrong with the DOL. Although the articles were accurate and the discussions in the local venues probably merited, it's important to shed light on the commendable, positive progress taking place within the department. Over the past 18 months, the Board of Livestock (BOL) has been forced to make several difficult decisions regarding personnel and spending. These decisions were not reached frivolously or in haste; the BOL acted on the best knowledge available to them and with the best interest of Montana's livestock industry in mind.

Some of the changes occurring in the DOL were strongly recommended by legislators with the stern warning that if things didn't change, there would be budget consequences at a minimum and perhaps an effort to do away with the department completely as a worst case scenario. Montana is unique in that the DOL is a stand-alone agency; most other states include all agriculture in the Department of Agriculture. This is justified because the livestock industry alone accounts for 48 percent of the agricultural income for the state and is nearly equal to the second largest sector of the Montana economy. The board took these suggestions seriously and made every effort to preserve the financial and functional integrity of the department.

The board has been working with the Long Range Planning Committee (LRP), a group of industry stakeholders organized at the request of several legislators during the 2015 Legislative Session. The LRP

meets regularly to recommend strategic departmental changes as well as place prioritization of those recommendations. Some of the suggested changes are already in process such as increased transparency in the budget process as well as how the budget is reported to the public and the board. Other suggestions, such as how to deal with changes in livestock marketing and lab administration, are longer range and will require more study.

In response to recent personnel vacancies, the board has hired two very qualified individuals to fill vacancies left after recent departures. Recently hired are Leslie Doely to fill the Brands Division Manager slot and the other, Mike Honeycutt to the Executive Officer position. These are young energetic professionals who have already demonstrated the management skills needed to move the department in a positive direction.

Milk inspection fees, employee payouts, retirements within the department, changes in cattle marketing, disease control, bison and increased federal regulations are all challenges that lie ahead for the staff and board at the department, but new people on the board and in management are committed to listening to producers to make decisions that are fair and equitable yet allow the department to fulfill their mission and provide services and support to the long term viability of the livestock industry in Montana.

Montana Farm Bureau looks forward to working with the BOL and the department in shaping the future for a vibrant livestock industry. We hope producers around the state get on board with the changes in the department and become a part of the solution instead of dwelling on the past.



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# What's wrong with 21st Century farming?

**A**griculture is one of the oldest professions. Today, however, with most Americans at least one generation removed from the soil, it is easy to understand why most people reminisce about "the way it used to be." Many people think that farms and ranches are run the way they were in the 1950s and many others believe that we should go back to operating that way. While the work ethic and pride have remained the same, the equipment and technology we use have changed dramatically.

Today farmers and ranchers use extremely high-tech equipment. We have had auto steer tractors for over 20 years but that doesn't just translate in straight rows that look nice in the field. Auto steer is the basis for many more technologies that are even more impressive. We now have auto steer seeding and spraying equipment that, through the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), shuts off rows of spray, fertilizer or seed so we don't over apply to areas that have already been treated. Irrigation systems using data from drones or satellites allow us to place more water on dry areas of cropland without over watering other areas. When combines pull into the field, they begin collecting data on production that is run through computer programs that determine the optimum amount of fertilizer for the next year. Our crops today can be bred to resist weeds and disease while providing greater production of healthier commodities. Technology is not limited to crops; ranchers have data available on cattle genetics that provide easier calving, faster gain, and other traits that are desired by the consumer.

The collection and study of data is now an integral part of the agricultural business. Although the ownership of that data is a subject of debate, the outcome from the use of it is not. Through the use of technology, American agriculture has reduced the amount of pesticide used by 116 million pounds since 1980 according the May 2014 USDA Economic Bulletin #124. American agriculture uses half of the amount of fertilizer per acre of any developed country (Max Roser, Our World in Data) and provides food for 168 people per agricultural producer compared to 25 in 1960. All this is done on 21,000 acres less than we farmed in the

1980s. American livestock producers are not left out of increases through technology. They are producing more beef with fewer animals through breeding and the ability to market more of each animal. According to a USDA Outlook Forum, the average carcass weight has increased by around 100 pounds per animal from 1991 to present day. Today we market everything but the moo.

Producers access data differently than in the past. At a recent Farm Bureau meeting a Millennial stated that nearly 70 percent of the information he uses is from his mobile phone. It is imperative that we make the information we disseminate through websites, mobile sites and social media relevant, timely and interesting. Your Farm Bureau has accepted the challenge of this new world of information and will be rolling out a new website that is mobile friendly later this year.

Many Americans still picture the agricultural world as grandpa saw it, but it has changed significantly. While it is still hard, dirty work, technology has allowed us to remain viable even as lower commodity prices have reduced the bottom line significantly. By the way, in many cases grandpa is probably still on the farm and is most likely as adept with the new technology as the grandkids.



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**John Youngberg**  
Executive Vice President, MFBF

“The collection and study of data is now an integral part of the agricultural business. Although the ownership of that data is a subject of debate, the outcome from the use of it is not.”



**Zippy Duvall**

President, American Farm Bureau Federation

“We need to connect through our shared values, explain how we take care of our land and animals, and tell people about the important steps we take to ensure their food supply is safe.”

# Taking Ag's Message Beyond the Fencerows

**W**hen I attended my first county Farm Bureau meeting back in 1977, I never imagined that I'd have the privilege to serve as your president one day. My Farm Bureau journey is truly a testament to how this organization invests in young people and gives farmers and ranchers the tools we need to protect our livelihood. One of the greatest joys of Farm Bureau leadership for me has been getting the chance to give back and pass on what I have learned to the next generation.

It has certainly been a whirlwind since we all met in Orlando, but there's no time to waste in keeping up the important work of our great organization. I've enjoyed meeting with many of you over the last few months, and look forward to getting out to visit more of our members across the country to hear directly from you about the issues you are facing on your farms and ranches. I'm eager to bring your stories to Capitol Hill and represent U.S. agriculture there, but I'm not the only one our lawmakers want to hear from.

The fact is: Farmers and ranchers need to be the ones telling our story or someone else will. We each have been given a voice, but it's our responsibility to speak up and use it. That's what my father taught me when I was a young farmer just starting out and complaining about regulations and milk prices. "You're not going to solve those problems inside your fencerows," he said. "You've got to get outside your fencerows." My dad encouraged me to attend my first county Farm Bureau meeting, and with the journey that followed, I got a lot farther outside my fencerows than I ever expected. But I have learned over and over again that what my dad said was right: We can't solve

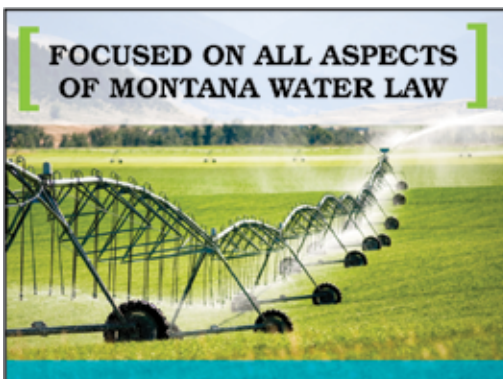
the problems facing agriculture if we're not willing to step outside our comfort zone.

I am proud of the thousands of Farm Bureau members who are investing their time in this important work. Last year alone, 2,415 Farm Bureau members from across the country took their messages straight to Capitol Hill and met with lawmakers to tackle the issues facing agriculture. Our state and national staff work tirelessly fighting for you, but representatives want and need to hear from the people in their home districts.

We also need to get out there and share our stories with consumers. People don't trust what they don't know. And they don't trust agriculture because they don't understand it. Most Americans have never been to a farm and didn't even grow up near one, but they are ready to learn more about where their food comes from. We need to open up the lines of communication. We need to connect through our shared values, explain how we take care of our land and animals, and tell people about the important steps we take to ensure their food supply is safe.

There's one other thing consumers need to hear about: How unjust regulation is making our lives so difficult. We know many of our members are afraid to speak openly about their battles with the EPA, Army Corps and others. We also know the media can be our ally in these struggles – if only we speak up and let journalists tell our story in the first place.

Being an advocate for agriculture is not an easy job, but thankfully farmers are used to hard work. More than that, we're not afraid of a challenge. Step outside your fencerows. We must be faithful with our opportunities today if we want to preserve our freedoms for tomorrow.



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# Playing it Safe without Grabbing Hold of the Hovercraft

BY MARIAH SHAMMEL

Raising a family on a farm/ranch is the coolest thing in the world and it's hard to imagine doing it any other way. Each day offers new experiences and memories for our kids that most youngsters never get to be a part of. We have tractors driving through our yard, cows on the move, the occasional equine escapee who likes to greet us at the dining room window while we're eating lunch, augers moving grain from bin to truck, and the list goes on. You can imagine the bedlam! With the (usually) organized chaos, though, comes the very real issue of ag safety, which we deal with on a daily basis.

Favorite Farmer and I know people who have lost siblings, spouses and children to farm accidents. Needless to say, safety on the farm is not something we take lightly around here. We have always been very vigilant with car seats, seatbelts and not allowing our kids to ride in the front seats of vehicles when there is a back seat available (yes, even on the three-mile dirt road between the highway and our house). I'm pretty sure people around here think we're crazy but it's always "fine" to throw them in the front until one split-second later it's not—skidding to a halt to avoid a deer or hitting a chunk of ice is all it takes to send a kid launching through a windshield or hitting their head on the vehicle ceiling. Over-protective? Maybe. Just a mom who doesn't want to regret an avoidable decision that would forever affect her family? Definitely!

With Little Man turning five in a couple of months, he's becoming Mr. Independent and wants to be a part of everything we do, which makes my better half and I smug with pride in every way. The more active his role becomes, the more important it is to not only make sure we put him in a safe environment, but that we teach him how to put himself and those around him in the best safety situation possible.

The kids know "their area" when we're working cows at the corrals, where to



Little Man and Little Lady have fun with calves.

stand when tractors are driving through, to never get close to a PTO or auger (whether it's moving or not), how to act when we walk through the yearlings to grain them and if there's ever a question, they know they can always make a break for our fenced in yard. Unfortunately, some of our children are better at this than others!

I've never questioned Little Man's sense of awareness when it comes to his surroundings (it drives me crazy when we're going on a walk and someone turns onto our lane a mile down the road and we have to stop walking, move off the road and wait for the five mile per hour vehicle to reach us before being allowed to continue our trek) but our youngest is another matter. If she sees an animal, she'll find any way she can to get to it and listening to her parents is definitely not one of her strong points. Favorite Farmer and I always have to remind ourselves that she's only two but with our way of life, the sooner we can get the safety lessons instilled in her, the better.

I like to think that it won't be long before I can stop worrying about the kiddos when it comes to ag safety but with number three due any day, the cycle is about to start all over again. I still worry about Favorite Farmer when he's constantly working on machinery and dealing with hormone-ridden bovines. Every night,

without fail, I sleep with one eye open until I see the lights of his pickup roll up the drive from making his last calving rounds.

It's hard to walk the line between being a "helicopter parent" and being too blasé but all we can do is the best we can do. Has Little Man had to catch a ride home in one of the grain trucks with only a bench seat in the front and enough mouse stink to make a person pass out? Of course.

Does Little Lady have to be in situations that aren't always optimal so we can deal with a cow that's about to make things a whole lot worse? You bet. At any particular moment, all we have is our best judgment.

Technology has made certain aspects of agriculture safer than they used to be, but accidents on the farm are still a major problem in today's rural world. We're doing everything we can to make sure tragedy doesn't hit our family and can already see the trickle-down affect taking place. Just the other day, I was meeting Little Man on his bike at the cattle guard and as I backed the Jungle Buggy out of the shed, he grabbed his sister's hand and stayed with her (she was inside our yard, right where I had told her to stay) until I arrived—something we've said must be making sense! If you have questions on how to make your place safer for your family, contact the Montana Farm Bureau office where they have a variety of helpful resources.





# 58th Annual Agents' Meeting Held in Billings, Montana

**M**ountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company recently held its 58th Annual Agents' Meeting in Billings, Montana. The annual conference includes recognition of those agents who have achieved superior production and overall service during 2015.

Mark Martin of Sidney, Montana, was honored as Mountain West's "Top Montana Agent" for his outstanding sales production.

An elite group of Montana agents qualified for Mountain West's President's Club. This award is presented to those agents who were on goal in three lines of insurance: life, auto, and fire/liability. Those who earned this prestigious award were CJ Mayer, Bozeman; and Jared Vielleux, Fort Benton.



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# Raising sheep and **getting involved**

**G**ary Heibertshausen joined the Montana Farm Bureau in 2010 when he moved from Ohio to Montana. Heibertshausen and his wife, Joyce, had both been working full-time jobs as well as raising sheep, cattle and kids on their small farm in the Buckeye State. Even with a few folks telling them they were crazy to move away from civilization, the Heibertshausens settled on a ranch in Alzada where today they run 3000 sheep and grow 400 acres of alfalfa-grass hay.

Heibertshausen was elected to the board in November 2015, replacing Mack Cole who resigned from the board due to health issues. "I wanted to help make a difference. Farmers and ranchers are disappearing from American culture, yet we can't disappear because people have to eat," says Heibertshausen. "We need to get that 98.5 percent of people who aren't farming and ranching to understand that the food we are growing is safer than



it's perceived. We eat what we produce. Farmers, ranchers and agribusiness are not trying to take over the world, as some people would have you believe. We just

want to grow food and feed people." The sheep rancher who is vice president of the Powder River/Carter County Farm Bureau says he wants to be a good



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communications liaison between the board and his District 5 members. "It's important to keep members informed on what the board and Farm Bureau are doing. Because of schedules, sometimes your friends and neighbors aren't really paying attention to everything Farm Bureau is doing. I can help bridge that gap. Being in a leadership position at Farm Bureau is a great way to get our story to folks not involved in agriculture. By being on the board, I hope to be able to get our story out to even more people."

Heibertshausen serves on the American Farm Bureau Issues Advisory Committee (Environmental Regulations) and was in Washington, D.C. in February for their meetings. "When you visit large cities, it becomes very apparent no one has any idea what farmers and ranchers do. They are convinced imported food is safer and healthier than what we are growing in the U.S.," he says. "Once you explain about how the process works, they suddenly



understand that food produced in the U.S. is a lot safer."

When he is on the road for Farm Bureau, his trusty "hired hand" is Joyce. "When I went to D.C, she was home handling the winter lambing. She was finished before I turned around and came to Bozeman for the board meeting a couple of weeks later. She holds down the fort."

The couple loves ranching in Montana. "It's pleasant. Every day there is something to do, and Joyce and I get to work

together. When we were in Ohio, she would go off to her job and I'd go off to mine but now we can work together. I wish I had done it 50 years ago!" Heibertshausen says. He points out the good neighbors in his area make all the difference. "We look after each other. I can call on any of my neighbors if I have a problem and they will be there, and vice versa."

He explains the reason the couple chose sheep over cows is easier handling and less risk of injury. "Our land is well suited for sheep. It doesn't have much water. Still, I think being diverse is a wise choice in agriculture, so once we get some water projects done there may be cattle in our future. We are currently working on rotational grazing and forage scouting, as well."


With Heibertshausen's dedication to agriculture, getting the word out about agriculture to consumers and Montana Farm Bureau, District 5 is in good hands.





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# Why We **AI**

BY TRAVIS STANDLEY

**R**anching in my opinion is one of the best careers and lifestyles in the world. It is also one of the most difficult when it comes to the amount of knowledge and expertise that is required with new technologies that are readily available. It seems that there is always something new or a better method than previously used. A person can get overwhelmed by all the new techniques or gadgets that are supposed to make things easier to accomplish one's goals. Although the commercial use of artificial insemination is recent (1937), the sequence of events leading to today's industry traces back to the 17th century. Artificial Insemination (AI) is also used in numerous different animals, including humans. Across all species one thing remains the same and that is that the procedure must be done in the quickest and most painless way possible in order to ensure conception and health of the reproductive system. Even though this is not a new technology most producers are still not incorporating it into their management strategies. While the genetic advantages to using AI in beef cattle are well known, the rate of use across the country remains very low. According to USDA data (2012) about 5 percent of cows and 16 percent of heifers in the U.S. beef herd are bred artificially. AI is a valuable tool the producers can use to their advantage; however, it is also my belief that AI will not work for every ranch.

So when it comes to decisions like choosing between buying a bull or buying semen for AI, the business manager needs to determine which one is most cost effective and best fits their ranch. What are the pros and cons of AI?

## Disadvantages

- These include the amount of time livestock managers must spend checking females for estrus or "heat."
- Putting cattle through working facilities multiple times. Some special facilities for corraling and insemination are required.
- Clean-up bulls (a bull turned out to breed any cows that didn't conceive

“Farmers and ranchers strive to use the safest and most efficient methods and products available for animal care. It's up to the farmer or rancher to choose the method of breeding that will work best for his herd.”

under artificial means) are still required.

- Trained personnel are required to perform the technique.
- The biggest disadvantage is the amount of time, labor, and management that it takes to perform this task successfully.

## Advantages

- It saves on the cost of buying and keeping/feeding bulls year round.
- It prevents the spread of certain diseases.
- The semen of a desired sire can be used even after the death of that particular sire.
- Safer for smaller cows and heifers as bulls can be bigger and heavier as they age.
- Semen from one bull can be used on thousands of females a year instead of the actual bull being only able to cover 20-25 females in a breeding season.
- The rate of genetic development and production gain can be increased, by using semen from males with superior genetics.

The biggest reason we use AI on our ranch is the opportunity for genetic advancement. We keep most of our own females to put back into our herd. AI allows us to breed to bulls we would otherwise not be able to, due to expense. The other advantage that we have in common with many ranches is that it involves the entire family. My parents still run and manage the operation with myself and my wife and my brother and his wife all contributing in our own ways. We all share a love of agriculture and the animals in which we are responsible for. We have plenty of labor (in between our



full time jobs) available for our small ranch.

AI allows us to breed our heifers and cows to different bulls without having to purchase multiples of each. We still have to buy a clean-up bull for the heifers. We also don't breed all the cows in our herd, mostly because we only have one technician (me) and fatigue can become an issue to the amount of time and the success in percentage of conception. We use a 7-day protocol (which is one of many methods for AI procedures), on both our heifers and mature cows, which adds another degree of timing, as the heifers have a shorter amount of time in the protocol than the cows. Although the animals go through the facilities three different times during the process, they spend only minutes in the facilities and it is an easy process. Any rancher's goal is to reduce stress and to work cattle in the calmest, most efficient way possible. We use this fixed time (which means we don't heat detect) AI protocol because we have to do the majority of the work in evenings and weekends. I realize that heat detection would give us better conception rates but time is still the most important commodity for everyone.

Farmers and ranchers strive to use the safest and most efficient methods and products available for animal care. It's up to the farmer or rancher to choose the method of breeding that will work best for his herd.



*Travis Standley was raised on a commercial cow-calf operation outside of Cascade, MT. He worked as an MSU Extension agent for almost 10 years and is currently a Livestock Nutrition Specialist for Westfeeds.*





# MONTANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION

## *2015 Annual Report*

### HOW WILL THE FOUNDATION IMPACT THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE?

Our long range plan is a work in progress, but we want you to get a feel for how we plan to invest your donations and your support. As part of a major strategic planning process mentioned by President Hanson, we are exploring how we can meet the following long-term goals.

#### **Provide a stronger voice for agriculture:**

Continue to support leadership development programs such as REAL Montana and agricultural advocacy programs within MFBF. Consider funding independent research on political and economic issues important to agriculture. Create public relations campaigns that show the importance of ag to our economy.

#### **Support youth leadership development:**

Continue to support organizations that are providing leadership development and enhance support for the MFBF YF&R program.

**Work to improve the economic viability of agriculture in Montana:** One idea our Foundation is considering is to fund university research aimed at improving options for Montana's farmers and ranchers.

#### **Invest in Montana rural development:**

Incentivize programs that make a job rather than take a job. This could include intensive training on entrepreneurship and ideas that encourage people to grow main street businesses in rural Montana towns.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Montana Farm Bureau Foundation (MFBFo) is in existence to support Montana agriculture through education, research, and community support, with a special emphasis for the development of our youth. I'm glad to report that we are gearing up for our most effective year to date in meeting that mission. Our board of directors is engaged in a long range planning effort to see how we can build on our success and better invest the resources entrusted to us to **benefit the future of agriculture in Montana.**



Although this planning process is not complete our Foundation's goal is to take a major step forward in serving agriculture. We will be looking at ways to provide a stronger voice for agriculture, enhance our youth leadership development and agricultural educational efforts, work to keep agriculture economically viable and help to improve the health of rural communities in Montana.

These are lofty goals, but generous donors have put Montana Farm Bureau Foundation in a position to play a bigger role in this arena. This will require our Foundation to build upon our successful fundraising to developing legacy donors motivated to do more so we can do more for agriculture and our communities.

Charitable giving as part of estate planning is a viable tool to help families protect their farms and ranches for the future and provide for the needs of rural Montana. Our Montana Farm Bureau Foundation is a great option for those who believe that a viable future is dependent on prudent investments in the present.

I'm proud of our accomplishments to date and thankful for our generous donors mentioned in this MFBFo 2015 Annual Report, and I'm excited for our future. If you want to find out more or commit to helping with our efforts just fill out and return the Support Form in this report or contact our Foundation Coordinator, Scott Kulbeck at [scottk@mtbf.org](mailto:scottk@mtbf.org) or 406-587-3153.

Bob Hanson, President





## PROGRAM OF WORK

### Ag Education Materials

Montana Farm Bureau Foundation provided more than \$5,000 worth of agricultural education materials to classrooms and organizations throughout Montana. We gave out 10,000+ Food and Farm Facts, Ag Mags and pencils printed with farm facts. We partnered with the MFBF Women's Leadership Committee and Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee to provide accurate ag books to county Farm Bureaus so they could read them to local schools and provide copies for their school libraries.



### Young Farmer & Rancher Leadership Conference



The Foundation awarded \$6,000 in scholarships to Montana young farmers and ranchers who attended the 2016 YF&R Leadership Conference in Kansas City, MO in February. Almost 50 Montanans and 1,100 of Farm Bureau's best and brightest young leaders gathered in the Show Me state to be inspired toward even greater advocacy for agriculture.

This year's conference featured workshops offering a range of options, from crop insurance to legislative issues to labeling and antibiotics. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to visit with young farmers and ranchers from all over the United States and heard from motivational speakers such as Jason Brown, a former NFL star who traded it all for a tractor.

Annually, this conference draws rave reviews and elicits comments such as this from 2016 attendee, Skylar Shirley. She says she, "Loves this conference because of all of the networking and meeting people who love agriculture and are advocating for something that they are so passionate about."

## MINI GRANTS

The following are an example of the ten Mini Grants of \$500 each that were awarded in 2015:

#### Pollinator Outdoor Classroom

*Glasgow Science Club* - This project started with a hands-on Outdoor Classroom with education on pollinators and how they are critical in sustaining plant life and provide a huge impact to many areas of agriculture.

#### Luther Ag Education Program

*Luther School PTA* - This program focused on how food is grown and why it's important to the United States and the world. Students created a greenhouse program, went on a field trip to a sugar beet farm and a cattle ranch and learned about agricultural technology.

#### Livestock Judging

*Mission Valley FFA* - MFBFo assisted the Mission Valley FFA chapter to attend

the National FFA Convention representing Montana. On route to the Convention, the chapter participated in several collegiate level judging events.

#### After-School Ag Education

*Big Sandy Cultural Fund* - This Mini-Grant helped to pay for agricultural education materials and career mentoring for students interested in agriculture.

#### Ag Days

*Townsend Schools* - This event allowed students to experience a variety of workshops on farming and ranching skills, equipment and agricultural products.

### Supporting Ag Education

MFBFo supports youth education and leadership development by working with organizations such as Montana FFA Foundation, Montana 4-H and Ag in Montana Schools. Our Foundation provided over \$10,000 in scholarships during 2015 so that Montana youth can receive the training and education they need to become leaders for the industry of agriculture.

### Leadership Development

Montana Farm Bureau Foundation is in our third year of providing tuition scholarships for members of the REAL Montana program (Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership). Participants analyze complex issues associated with agriculture and natural resources while receiving intensive leadership training and exposure to a wide range of experiences and viewpoints. Recently the current REAL Montana class spent a week in Washington D.C. for a training seminar. Class members spent a day on Capitol Hill meeting with the Montana Congressional delegation and receiving briefings from Senate Agriculture and Energy and Natural Resources Committee staffers.

### Summer Conference Activities

The Summer Conference for 2015 was held in Sidney in June and MFBFo extends our heart-felt gratitude to Richland County members and their community. Our activities during the Conference raised over \$14,000 that will benefit programs such as scholarships, leadership development events for youth, purchasing ag education materials and much more. Generous members, guests and sponsors supported educational tours, our annual golf tournament and fundraising dinner.



Tours for members included Safflower Technologies and the USDA Ag Research Facility. During the Foundation's Baron's Ball volunteers explained Foundation programs and support to communities and organizations involved in agricultural education and leadership development.





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Northwest Counties Farm Bureau  
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Sweet Grass County Farm Bureau
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### COPPER LEVEL SPONSORS: \$25 TO \$100

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Northern Ag Network  
Riverbend Embroidery  
Tintina Resources - Black Butte Copper Project  
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William and Tina Rehbein  
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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Montana Farm Bureau Foundation Board of Directors are leaders who have a passion for agriculture. They bring a diverse set of perspectives together to unite the Foundation strategy of building agriculture awareness and understanding. Thank you to the following board members for their leadership and fundraising.

Bob Hanson, President - White Sulphur Springs

Hans McPherson, Vice President - Stevensville

John Youngberg, Executive Vice President - Belgrade

Ed Bandel - Floweree

Jim Bowman - Hinsdale

Tom Cunningham - Billings

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Lew Zimmer - Bozeman

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Scott Kulbeck, Coordinator - Belgrade

### Get Your Foundation License Plate!

All of these great educational opportunities, grants and scholarships are funded in part by the proceeds the Foundation receives from its very own "Supporting Montana Agriculture" license plate. If you don't already have this plate on your vehicle, please consider upgrading the next time you renew your vehicle registration. Your County Treasurer's Office will have all the details.



**MONTANA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION**  
*Serving in the Future of Montana Agriculture*

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# Meet Insurance Agent Jared Vielleux

BY REBECCA COLNAR

Jared Vielleux understands his farm and ranch customers and their concerns about insurance. The agent lives in Fort Benton. "I'm a fourth generation Chouteau County resident," Vielleux says proudly. He grew up on a family farm where he helped with the cattle and later with their grain farm. He received a degree in Animal Science from Montana State University.

"It was because of my involvement as an alumni in the MSU Bobcat Club that I ended up in the insurance field," explains Vielleux. "Out of college I worked for Superior Feeds in Chester and then was a nutritional consultant for Brand X Feeds, spending a lot of time traveling. However, I was hoping to find a career closer to home."

Because Vielleux was president of the local MSU Bobcat Club, he had the opportunity to attend statewide meetings where he met Brett Keaster. "At that time, I was working for a car dealer and sold Brett a truck. He told me about an opening at the agency in Fort Benton, and I decided to start my career with Mountain West Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company in 2013."

"I like the ability to interact with the insureds," says Vielleux. "I enjoy helping them decide what they need to protect their livelihood and their family, whether it's property/casualty or life insurance."

The agent is proud of his work with the Chouteau County Farm Bureau. "Chouteau County Farm Bureau holds a customer appreciation/recruitment breakfast the morning of our summer celebration parade in front of our office. We participate in the parade by passing out custom water bottles. In addition, we hand out \$1 coupons during sporting events at local high schools to be used at the concessions. That took a little while for people to appreciate it, but I believe we're getting some traction and people are noticing."

Vielleux helps with the county Farm Bureau booth during the county fair and stays involved with the Chouteau County board. "I go to their meetings and keep them aware of what I'm doing, and they tell me what they are doing. We work very well together."

He is sure to let his insured or potential insureds know why being a Farm Bureau member is a good thing "I tell them being in Farm Bureau gives their individual voice a chance to be heard. I know agriculture is very individualistic by its very nature, but people in agriculture have many common issues, and belonging to Farm Bureau brings people together. It allows them to have one, solid voice."

Vielleux is involved in his community, serving as captain of the Fort Benton Volunteer Fire Department, on the Signal Point Golf Course Board and a member of the River & Plains Society that oversees Fort Benton's museums.

The busy agent has been married for 17 years to Carley with two daughters, Jaelyn and Samantha, who keep their parents on the road with their involvement in volleyball, basketball, tennis, golf and swimming. Vielleux admits that attending the games helps business. "I like to be out in public as much as possible. A lot of my customers are parents of kids involved in sports, and it's good to be able to find out if there are any issues I need to deal with."

Although Vielleux was originally hired for Chouteau County, he began to help agent Karen Bowen in Havre. When she retired in October 2015, his territory expanded to Hill, Blaine and Phillips counties. He praises his office help in Fort Benton (Peggy Romano and Carol Klein) and Havre (Cassie Springer and Kimberly Seidlitz) who keep things running smoothly when he's on the road. "They are a huge help. My work couldn't be done without them."

He encourages members to get involved with their county Farm Bureaus. "The best way to help yourself is to get involved with what Farm Bureau is doing."



**Jared Vielleux**  
MWFBIC Agent

“I enjoy helping them decide what they need to protect their livelihood and their family, whether it's property/casualty or life insurance.”

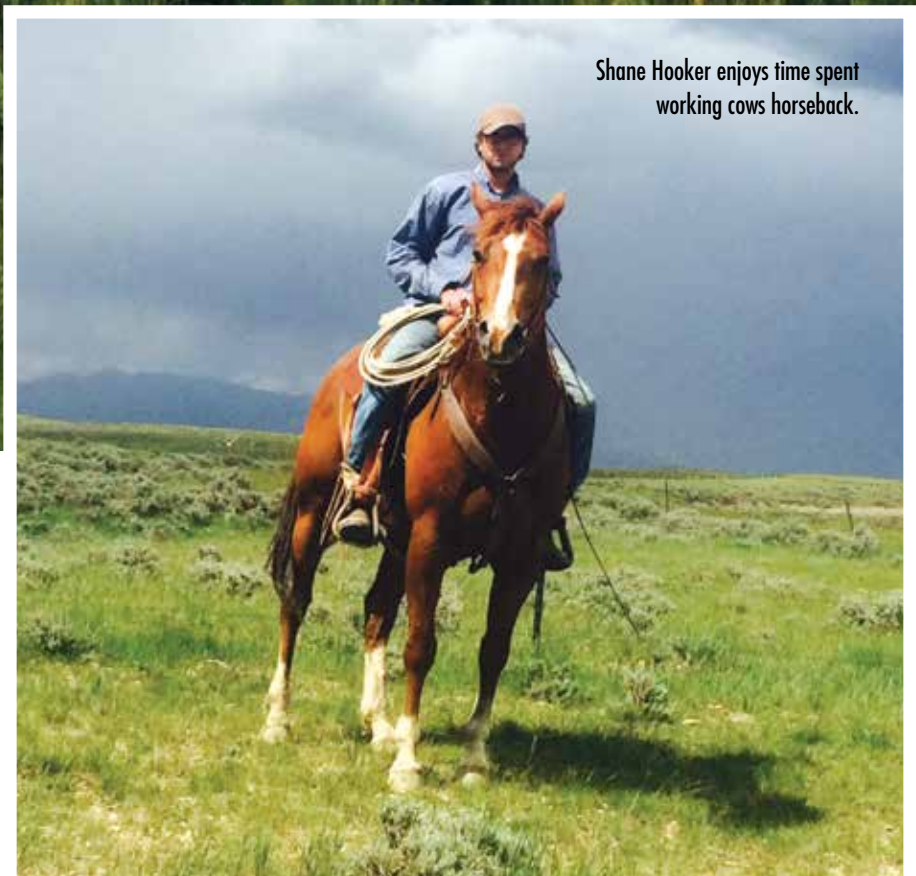
# Shane and Kellee Hooker:

## A bright future in ranching



**F**or some young people, the big city with its high-paying jobs, endless entertainment, fine dining and scores of peers holds real attraction. For Shane Hooker, and his wife, Kellee, life north of Ryegate, Montana (population 243), the allure is in the beauty of the land, working with livestock daily and spending their days together.

"I grew up on a ranch near Sand Springs and have always loved it. I had my own responsibilities growing up and when it was time to decide on a career, I knew



Shane Hooker enjoys time spent working cows horseback.



what I wanted was to continue to farm and ranch," says Shane. "I attended Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming, where I studied Farm and Ranch Management, taking classes in banking and finance. I wanted to learn more about farming, so I spent time with Todd Zinne learning about no-till farming. He primarily grows wheat and malt barley and I learned so much working with him."

In 2005 the Hooker family, which had homesteaded near Jordan, purchased their current ranch. The original ranch home, built in 1910, was a stage stop between Judith Gap and the railroad in Ryegate. When a neighbor's place went up for sale, Shane jumped at the chance to

“There is opportunity for improvement and expanding, whether it's developing pasture or improving the grazing situation. One of our larger projects is revamping the cattle pasture, which we're seeding and putting back to grassland.”

buy it, expanding their farming operation. "We decided to purchase it and that's what really cemented our commitment to stay involved in farming and ranching."

Wife Kellee wholeheartedly agrees. She was raised on a ranch near Columbus, Montana and is a fifth generation rancher. "I grew up in it, it's my passion," says the energetic young woman who not only enjoys ranching, but competing in rodeo events, especially breakaway roping and barrel racing.

"See those horses out there? The one with the blankets? Those are mine," she laughs. "They are a little more spoiled than the ranch horses."

The rodeo horses and ranch horses have work to do on the ranch, as Hooker Cattle Company does most of their work horseback, especially when changing pastures and branding. They run a horse breeding program, owning a two-year-old

Equipment ready to go at harvest time.



Shane checks out a new calf.

Quarter Horse stud and 15 mares.

Certainly the ranch believes in diversification. They have a commercial herd of Black Angus cattle as well as a flock of Targhee Rambouillet sheep and 1200 irrigated acres of farm land.

The calving keeps Shane, Kellee and Shane's father, Alan, especially busy in the spring. (They artificially inseminate heifers, which means many calves born in a short time span.) Lambing commences the third weekend of March, with the hopes of being done by April 15 when the tractors roll out for spring planting.

In mid-May the couple begins irrigating out of Swimming Woman Creek. "We move wheel lines morning and night. The first week you walk five miles a day to move it and you do that 10 times. We irrigate most of our hay barley and as well as our alfalfa and grass hay. Most of the time we can harvest enough hay that we don't need to buy much," says Shane.

### Ranching challenges

Shane, 22, enjoys the challenges of the ranch, especially the business challenges. "There is opportunity for improvement and expanding, whether it's developing pasture or improving the grazing situation. One of our larger projects is revamping the cattle pasture, which we're seeding and putting back to grassland from farmland. We've put in water pipelines, have dug out a few springs and have improved water crossings."

The Hookers agree that keeping one step ahead of predators poses a challenge, although the addition of Snookie the llama has helped keep their 200 sheep safe. The couple chuckles at the fright the llama gave the saddle horses. "It took them five days to decide to come into the corral and drink when we put her in there. She had been with horses before and liked them, but the horses didn't feel the same way."

"Snookie does a great job," adds Kellee. "At first our guard dogs didn't like her, but those dogs will go out after coyotes and



she stays with the herd to protect them. We share the Pyreneese and Akbash guard dogs with our neighbor. They roam back and forth between pastures."

The Hookers enjoy trying new practices. They have been working with the FSA office and plan to start growing unique cover crops. "This year we're going to plant radishes and oats to allow us to get more nitrogen into the soil to raise better crops on that land later. I think in years like this with grain prices down, using a cover crop is wise because we can run cows on that farm ground and they can benefit from the added grazing."

Shane says other methods they use to improve soil health is through using chemical fallow. "It's really important to keep up on the modern practices that can help make money while saving the soil."

They believe in using available technology for raising cattle, having recently purchased their own ultrasound

**“What I really enjoy about ranching is there are times when you're constantly busy, like calving, lambing, planting and harvest, but you are your own boss ... you can take a few days off in the summer to go to the lake, or in the winter to go snowmobiling, or compete in the rodeo. It's a great life.”**

machine. "We will know if we're having twins, we'll know how far along our cows are and if we should keep or sell a cow depending if her calving date works well

with our management plans."

The couple is also delighted with their vaccine "air rifle" that looks like a gun but shoots a "dart" into the cow up to 25 yards. "It's actually really accurate," they say. "It injects the vaccine into the cow, and once the wax that holds the needle in dissolves, the syringe just falls off. It's low stress on the animal. If she's out in the field, you don't have to run her in or rope her, just use the gun."

### Future Outlook

The couple believes the greatest challenge facing agriculture is increasing ag production for a growing population. "The world population is going to greatly increase by 2050, so farmers and ranchers are going to have to have their land produce more. I think it's so important for the younger generation to step up and be involved in agriculture," Kellee says. "Even if they don't get involved in growing food,



there are many ag-related jobs available."

The couple discusses the lack of the public's understanding about agriculture. "You would think that at Northwest College, everyone would understand agriculture, but they don't," Kellee laments. "I was on the rodeo team for Powell and my teachers would be upset when I missed class to travel to a competition. You get out in the world and people don't really care about farming and ranching or rural lifestyles."

Shane believes teaching kids young is a good way to combat ag ignorance. "We need more classes for younger students to learn where their food comes from," he notes. "I think social media can help, but it can also hurt. It only takes a group like PETA to click a button and they can spread a myth about agriculture to a wide scope

Shane and Kellee Hooker



of consumers." He does agree that social media, however, can allow a response to the lies, if only farmers and ranchers can respond quickly and believably.

The couple, who is involved in Wheatland/Golden Valley Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee, says belonging to an organization like Farm Bureau is critical. "Farm Bureau is good organization

and the advantages of belonging are huge, from having a voice in the legislature to saving money on membership benefits. Farm Bureau gives you a real opportunity to network with other young people who are farming and ranching," says Shane who serves as the county YF&R Chair.

A challenge to young people working on the family place is estate planning and Shane says the process is underway. Alan is an instrumental part of the ranch working full-time alongside the couple. He takes the lead on the cows and Shane is responsible for most of the farming decisions. The newly married young couple hopes to start a family and have the next generation to teach about agriculture and hand the reins to in the future.

"What I really enjoy about ranching is there are times when you're constantly busy, like calving, lambing, planting and harvest, but you are your own boss," says Shane. "You can take a few days off in the summer to go to the lake, or in the winter to go snowmobiling, or compete in the rodeo. It's a great life."



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(Left to right): Craig, Conni, Corky, Bill, Taylor and Wayne French on the ranch.



# The French Family:

## Facing the challenges of ranching with three generations

BY REBECCA COLNAR

**A** love for the land keeps many generations returning to the ranch to carry on traditions and implement innovations. The French family from Malta has a strong sense of what it means to own a ranch, and today three generations are living and working on the ranch.

Craig and Conni French are the fourth generation on the place, and instrumental to the entire enterprise. Craig's great grandfather homesteaded in what is now the French Ranch in 1910. Estate planning was already in the works—his great grandfather helped set up each of his two daughters with 100 cows and kept

300 for himself which he sold when he retired. Each of the daughters kept their 100 head and ran them in common in the summertime.

In 1958, Craig's mother, Corky, the third generation on the place, married Bill French and the two started leasing the 100-cow outfit when Craig's grandparents moved to town. Bill and Corky purchased the home place and kept expanding the herd and land to run 1000 head. Meanwhile, in 2002, Craig and Conni, who raised their three children on the ranch close to Craig's parents, bought their own land 20 miles up the road.

"Like so many ranchers at that time, we started with Herefords, but moved to Black Angus," Craig explained. "We now raise our own replacement heifers and purchase bulls from breeders like Stevenson Angus and Diamond Dot. Their bulls work well for us."

The ranch has irrigated hay, which Corky and Bill tackle with gusto every summer. In 2014, their nephew, Wayne and wife, Taylor, moved back to the ranch. "They help with hayig, so it's great because we have two haying teams in the summer, which is great. We used to hire a custom haying crew to help, but now with Taylor



and Wayne helping, we can get it done in good time."

Because of the large acreage of the French's – about 50,000 acres with 40 percent being private and 60 percent public, there is need for land and cattle management.

### Rangeland Management

When Conni and Craig attended the Ranching for Profit school which covered cell grazing and managing the soil, they returned enthusiastically ready to implement what they learned.

“Like so many ranchers at that time, we started with Herefords, but moved to Black Angus ... we now raise our own replacement heifers and purchase bulls from breeders like Stevenson Angus and Diamond Dot.”

"We certainly were interested in managing the land in a productive way, and going to this school really gave us the push we needed," Conni noted. "We started it because we had old growth that needed to be grazed and wanted to find a good way to accomplish that. We took 400 replacement heifers and covered 6,000 acres. However, with cell grazing, we set up 12 pastures

### The American Prairie Reserve: A Good Neighbor?

BY REBECCA COLNAR

The French Ranch borders the American Prairie Reserve (APR) land for 20 miles, a neighbor they do not find particularly neighborly. The APR is an organization that offers the "western experience" for tourists to see wild bison and other wildlife. APR is working to purchase land from what they call "willing" sellers that will eventually be linked with an existing three million acres of public land in the region.

Recently the APR applied to the Bureau of Land Management to graze bison year round, which worries the French Ranch on several levels.

"From the range management perspective, overgrazing occurs when a plant is grazed twice with no time for recovery," notes Craig. "Even if land is understocked, it can be overgrazed or over rested, and will start a deterioration of the plant community."

Craig believes that not managing the grass not only hurts plant life, it inhibits food production. "By not using your land for food animals, you're decreasing the food and fiber produced. If you don't care about managing your range, it tells me you're willing to starve people. I can't endorse APR's mission."

Conni cites safety issues as being a concern. "They've put in a four-wire barb, hot wire and smooth wire fence which they claim will keep the bison in as long as they have food and water; however what about the rogue bison bull? We will have our cows right across the fence from their bison. I fear for the safety of our property, our cows and for the people who come out to help us."

The family is also concerned about disease. "It would be a shame to bring the mess in Yellowstone Park up here. The APR people say they are taking steps so that won't happen, but in talking to veterinarians, brucellosis can lay dormant and resurface, or an animal could be a carrier."

"APR says they want to be neighbor, but they are only neighbors in the physical sense," Craig says. "A good neighbor doesn't want to buy me out, they want to help me out."

Craig's father, Bill, is openly opposed to the APR's mission. "What they represent is nothing this country needs. Right now our area has two excellent industries: cattle and wheat. Our Hard Red Spring Wheat is second to none, our cattle are second to none. But they are doing their best to ruin it," Bill says, shaking his head in dismay. "They have more buffalo now than ever. Of course, I'm worried that it will get designated as a national park. Our land will never be in better shape than today. We've taken care of this land. Now they want it because it's so good. Well, I'm doing what I've always wanted to do, and that's ranch. We're not leaving. This is our home. I'm not interested in their money."

which would all be rotated through. The longest we had them grazing one of the cells was ten days; the shortest was one day. The yearlings did very well, and they seldom challenged the electric fence."

Conni explained the main premise of cell grazing is to harvest the grass, and leave. "The recovery period is key. We have

what's called a brittle environment, which is semi-arid, short prairie grass," Conni said. "It requires a lot of recovery time. We have Beaver Creek running through the ranch so we found the safe parts of that creek for the cattle to drink from."

Some time is spent putting in fiberglass poles with solar chargers. "I was told to stay away from steel, but I still use them to in certain areas where more support is needed. I put in two miles of electric fence and only used 20 steel posts. The rest were fiberglass," Craig noted.

The Frenchs now use cell grazing from March 21 – July 20. "It's easy to move the cattle," Craig added. "They become really gentle. Sometimes we walk, sometimes we'll use four wheelers to move them. Once you get their attention, they follow. They get very accustomed to us."

The family does much of the cattle work with horses. "We feel it's less stressful for the cows, although we do sometimes use a four wheeler—and we walk a lot," Conni said with a smile.



## Phillips County Farm Bureau

With the creation of the new Phillips County Farm Bureau in January 2015, the French family decided to become involved in an organization they see as a watchdog on policy. "We went the Phillips County Farm Bureau organizational meeting. I wanted to keep myself informed on what was going on at the county, state and national levels, so I thought it would be good to sit on the board of directors. I realize it's important to be involved," said Craig. He has learned a lot in the past year and has huge respect for Phillips County Farm Bureau President Tom DePuydt. He is also very impressed with Farm Bureau's lobbying efforts.

## Corky and Bill share old-time tales

Catch Corky and Bill French at their home and it's likely you'll hear some good stories and share a lot of laughs. Both grew up in agriculture, as did most people mid-century rural America.

"We didn't have horse trailers," Corky remembered. "We rode our horses out to the pastures, did our work and rode them back. We ran in common with other ranchers at that time. I still remember there were times the mosquitos were so bad if you had to get off and open the gate you better hang onto your horse because the mosquitos were trying to get all of us. We always brought our cows in to the corrals and branded them, then trailed them back out."

Corky reminisced about the days of loading cattle on the train. "We'd trail cattle to Malta—which took a few days—and loaded them all the railroad cars to Sioux City. That would have been in the 1940s and early 1950s."

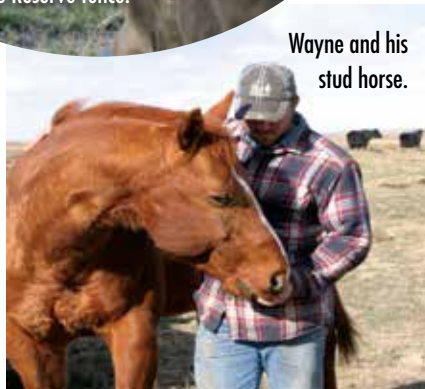
Bill has plenty of good stories to share. The 82-year-old was raised on a 100-acre farm with eight kids in his family in the Milk River Valley. "Everybody had milk cows, pigs, chickens and sugar beets. Sugar beets were the main cash crop,"



Taylor and Wayne French



Craig French checks out the American Prairie Reserve fence.



Wayne and his stud horse.

Bill said. "It was a good life and I was never hungry. There were 100 kids in my country school and we played a lot of sports. We actually had electricity. Now people might call it a simple but it wasn't that simple. You spent most of the time working for food, shelter and clothing."

Bill admitted he wasn't raised a cowboy but in his early days harvested a lot of sugar beets by hand and sheared sheep. "I didn't like school, I was always thinking about farming and ranching. After I got

out of high school, I took care of my folks place and my older brother and I worked as the French Brothers. I chased Corky for four years until she caught me!"

Bill takes credit for developing a lot of the property's current irrigation system. "I've learned a lot about irrigating. It's phenomenal what water will do for this country."

He has always worked hard. "I've

**“I want to pass that onto my children and grandchildren. My family has proven they want to carry on.”**

done haying jobs away from the place while Corky took care of the kids. We did fine. We had to work at it, but what the hell's the matter with that? Forget sitting around. You'll rust out before you wear out."

Bill believes it's important to carry on the business. "It's a viable business," Bills stated. "I have better cattle than I ever thought I had, I have better machinery. I want to pass that onto my children and grandchildren. My family has proven they want to carry on."

Grandson Wayne admits he's just like Bill, "All I ever wanted to do was farm and ranch, so here I am."

Bill smiles. "What more can you ask for?"







# Leadership opportunities at state, national level

BY REBECCA COLNAR

**M**ontana Farm Bureau makes a great stepping stone to advance into leadership positions. From serving on a county Farm Bureau board to serving on the state Farm Bureau board, there are plenty of ways to learn about leadership.

## Partners in Agricultural Leadership (PAL)

The Young Farmers and Ranchers program offers plenty of leadership training with the American Farm Bureau's Partners in Agricultural Leadership (PAL) program being the ultimate training. Jennifer Bergin, who has not only been involved on the state YF&R Committee but is District 3 Director for Montana Farm Bureau. In March, her PAL class headed to Brazil to learn more about agriculture.

"One of my favorite things with this program is meeting the farmers and what



A crop not seen in Montana—coffee!

they are doing," said Bergin. "It was very fascinating to see how coffee is grown. It was nothing like I expected. They are little green berries that turn red!"

"We visited with people who will farm a lot of acreage, but it's very spread out. They will farm 80 acres here, 20 acres there," Bergin said. "The one thing they are blessed with is a lot of rain so they can

double crop. For instance, they can grow corn in the winter and soybeans in the summer. They are very good about using the farmland they've got."

Worries about deforestation have resulted in federal guidelines about how much of the land can be farmed depending on the region. "For instance in



The PAL delegation checks out the corn production. Jennifer Bergin is on the far right, kneeling.



the north part of the country, 80 percent of your farmland can't be planted in crops. You can plant trees or grass. The areas we were visiting had a 20 percent set aside. However, because of technology, they are getting the same yields as they would have before the areas were protected," Bergin said. "The farmers were accepting of this, as it seems the government doesn't want them to harm them; they just want to make things better for the environment as well as for the farmers. There is a lot of money coming in from Norway, the World Trade Organization and more to help Brazil maintain the rainforest and preserve reforestation."

GMOs are not as contentious as in the U.S. Almost all of the soybeans they planted are GMO, as is most of the corn. "The majority of their corn is field corn, they just eat it when it's unripe as their sweet corn," Bergin said, noting an exception is sweet corn planted for Applebee's restaurants in Brazil.

Bergin said the trip made her realize the importance of the relationship between Brazil and the U.S. "We need to promote and understand each other's agriculture," the Melstone rancher said. "It's important to see what's out there. One needs to be aware of the rest of the world so you can do a better job with your agricultural products at home."

### REAL Montana

Another way to advance leadership skills is with the Resource Education Agriculture Leadership Montana. Real Montana is a comprehensive two-year program offering in-depth education and training in the agriculture and natural resource industries. Each year up to 20 participants are selected for the class, and frequently many are MFBF members. This year, MFBF National Affairs Director Nicole Rolf was selected. "REAL Montana is marketed as a program to help leaders take their skills to the next level," said Rolf. "By participating in the program, I hoped to not only improve my professional skills, but also learn to be a better advocate for agriculture and to learn about the other resource industries in our state. Building coalitions is beneficial as contacts

in the resource industry can be allies on important issue."

To date the group has attended four seminars: a team building event, working with the media, crop farming and governmental affairs.

"The first event in Bozeman provided general leadership training and activities to become acquainted with others," said Rolf.

Rolf found the media training event in Billings to be especially helpful. "We had experts from print, TV and radio provide tips on working with the media, how to get your story published and how to present yourself in interviews. We had mock interviews, and if they knew you had some experience, they tried hard to rile you. It was good for me. On the second day we went in pairs for interviews at radio



The REAL Montana class met with Senator Jon Tester, Congressman Ryan Zinke and Senator Steve Daines.



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stations and TV stations and visited the Billings Gazette."

The class in Great Falls was focused on crops where the speakers included an agricultural economist, the Wheat & Barley Committee, current grain issues and foreign workers. "We had Bing von Bergen provide a detailed talk on GMOs. It was very informative. If you were already familiar with genetic engineering, it was a great refresher and for those who didn't know anything on the topic, his talk was very thorough and educational," Rolf noted.

The group headed to Washington, D.C. for the next class in late February. Although Rolf spends time in the nation's capital for work, "every time I am there, I learn something new," she said. "We met with staff on relevant committees such as the Senate Agricultural Committee and the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Staff from Congressional offices discussed what their priority issues were."

Rolf said the group met with Congressman Zinke as well as with Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines. "What was unique is we split into small

groups which then went to separate agency visits. My group went to the U.S. Trade Representative's office where they were busy working on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which they see as very good for agriculture. I was impressed with

**“I've learned it's extremely important to get agricultural back in our political system on all levels. I'm so much better informed thanks to Farm Bureau and REAL Montana.”**

how non-bureaucratic the meeting was."

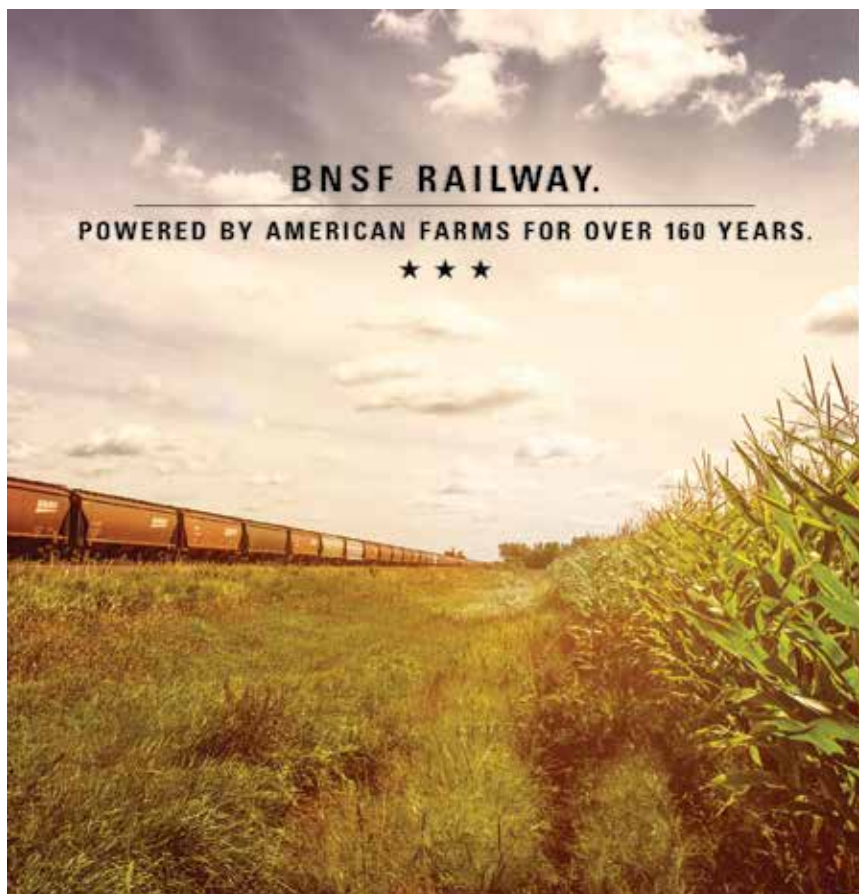
While in Washington, the group visited the headquarters of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) where they heard AFBF staff talk about labor, trade, Waters

of the U.S. and biotechnology. The group visited Gettysburg National Military Park for a tour, learning about leadership lessons garnered during the battle.

Darcia Patten, president of the Powder River/Carter County Farm Bureau, praised Farm Bureau and REAL Montana for their leadership training that encouraged her to run for county commissioner this year.

"Without being involved in Farm Bureau and REAL Montana, I probably wouldn't have agreed to run for office when I got a call," admitted the cattle rancher. "I've learned it's extremely important to get agricultural back in our political system on all levels. I'm so much better informed thanks to Farm Bureau and REAL Montana."

Patten, like Rolf, found all of the classes to be highly educational, especially the media training. "It was intense. We were videotaped, and it was interesting to think you're portraying yourself one way, but when you see yourself on video, you're not who you thought you were."



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# COUNTY NEWS

## Great County Events

**Powder River/Carter County Farm Bureau** hosted a safety day which featured Fire Chief Raymond Ragsdale from the Broadus Volunteer Fire Department. Ragsdale gave a fire safety demonstration, and PowerPoint on potential fire hazards in your home and ranch buildings.

Two Powder River First Responders, Mike Capra and Shane Copps, provided a demonstration with the new equipment purchased with the proceeds from a fund raiser they had last fall. They demonstrated their new ambulance purchased by Jesse Ambulance service.

Jim Larson, Montana Ag Safety Program, gave an agricultural safety seminar which included how to keep your family safe on the farm, and how to recognize dangers. The presentation received excellent feedback from the crowd. The county Farm Bureau served pulled pork sandwiches with coleslaw, chips and apple pie for dessert. The meal was provided by The Fire Safe program, and was prepared by Alyson Ragsdale of Hoover.



Jim Larson talks about safety on the farm at the Powder-River/Carter County safety day.



The group of county Farm Bureau volunteers included Carol Signalness, Kayla Bandel, Sarah Senecal, Marjorie Pribyl, Cindy Denning, Maureen Malinak and Beth Blevins.

**Northwest and Cascade County Farm Bureaus** teamed up to have a cooking day at the Ronald McDonald House in Missoula. Seven members of the county Farm Bureaus participated including Northwest Counties' Beth Blevins, Sarah Senecal and Maureen Malinak and Cascade County's Cindy Denning, Marjorie Pribyl and Carol Signalness with Kayla Bandel of Chouteau County Farm Bureau joining in. The women baked 20 casseroles, four chicken pot pies and three cheesecakes for families that will be staying at the Ronald McDonald House while their children are in the hospital.

"It went very well," said Beth Blevins, DVM, who spearheaded the event with Denning "There were six families staying at the house and we talked to them about what we did as farmers and ranchers. We had one of our animal care signs displayed. Everyone was very grateful for the homemade meal."

Blevins said the timing of the event was good, as there was plenty of room to store the casseroles in the Northwest Counties donated freezer.

"We'd like to do it again, maybe in the fall. We're hoping to make aprons we can all use with our Farm Bureau and Our Food Link logo," Blevins said. She said they left Ag in the Classroom materials for siblings to enjoy when staying at the home with their parents.



Cindy Denning and Carol Signalness cooking at the Ronald McDonald House.

**Fergus County Farm Bureau** members Deb Bricker, Kris Descheemaeker and Dale Strouf, along with MFBF Central Regional Manager Rikki Murrill, gave an Accurate Ag Books presentation to kids at Highland Park School in Lewistown.





## Coming Up

**Wheatland/Golden Valley Farm Bureau** is participating in the Our Food Link program by supplying reusable grocery bags to local grocery stores for clerks to bag customers' groceries. The reusable bags have photos from the Farm Bureau "animal care" campaign and the bags include Food & Farm Facts literature, a local producer profile newsletter, notepads, pens and stickers for kids. Some lucky customers may receive a grocery gift card on behalf of the Wheatland/Golden Valley Farm Bureau that will be included at each of the event locations.



**Yellowstone County Farm Bureau** plans a public event called the "Sweet Truth About Genetically Modified Food" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 12 at Yellowstone Valley Electric meeting room in Huntley. Rhonda Steiger, sugar beet farmer and GMO advocate, will be giving a presentation. Bring your friends as this is to be an educational discussion about this controversial topic. For more information, call Lisa McFarland, 406-698-9809.

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## Montana Farm Bureau, Caterpillar Inc. Announce New Partnership

Montana Farm Bureau and Caterpillar Inc. announce a new partnership that will provide members up to \$2,000 in purchase incentives on Cat machines. In addition, Caterpillar plans to support Farm Bureau programs in 2016 and coordinate with Farm Bureau on other efforts.

"Our extensive product line, with more than 300 Cat machines, reflects our commitment to the ongoing success of American agriculture and rural businesses," said Dustin Johansen, Caterpillar Agriculture Industry Manager. "We're proud to partner with Montana Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation and help members get their jobs done with the highest quality, best value equipment, attachments and integrated solutions in the industry."

Eligible equipment includes Cat skid steer loaders, compact and multi-terrain loaders, wheel loaders, telehandlers, backhoe loaders, hydraulic excavators and track-type tractors. A range of incentives are offered.

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The Farm Bureau Member Benefit discount on Cat machines can be combined with any current retail discounts, promotions, rebates or offers available through Caterpillar or its dealers, with the exception of other membership purchase incentives. All Montana Farm Bureau members are eligible. Members must provide a valid Member Verification Certificate to the Cat dealer at the time of purchase to receive the discount. Certificates may be obtained at [www.fbadvantage.com/cat](http://www.fbadvantage.com/cat).



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Twenty-five entries will be drawn prior to the MFBF annual meeting in November 2016. Those 25 will not only win free registration to the 2016 Annual Convention, but the winner of the Chevy Silverado will be drawn from those 25 entries at the awards banquet. For more information visit <http://mfbf.org>.

# Young Farmer and Rancher News

## Upcoming Events

The **Annual Montana Young Farmers and Ranchers Tour** will be held May 20-21 in Lewistown. Based out of the Yogo Inn, the tour will cover Mountain Meadows and Arntzen Angus, along with Spika Design and Manufacturing, Bos Terra and more. For more information, visit [www.mfbf.org](http://www.mfbf.org) or call **Sue Ann Streufert, 406-587-3153**.

YF&R's **Hoofin' It for Hunger** is slated for Saturday, October 8 at Fort Keogh in Miles City. Mark your calendars and look for more information on the Hoofin' It for Hunger Facebook page and in upcoming Farm Bureau publications.



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# Young Farmer and Rancher News

## National YF&R Conference

The Montana Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers headed to Kansas City in mid-February where they had a delegation of almost 50 members from Montana.

Gil Gasper, who attended the conference for the first time as Montana's Young Farmer and Rancher Chair, thought the experience was extremely educational. "Being the chair, I had the opportunity to sit in on different sessions to help me with what I am doing for Farm Bureau. It was good to network with the chairs from different states," Gasper said. "It was interesting to find out even though I am from Montana, some of the issues of concern are similar to those from someone in Florida. They are working to find the solutions to the same problems we have. You just can't put a price on the feedback and ideas you return with."

Gasper thought the workshops offered a range of options, from crop insurance to legislative issue to labeling and antibiotics. "There was so much to do. I enjoyed watching our two collegiate representatives competing in the Discussion Meet."

Twenty-year old Skylar Shirley, president of UM-Western's Collegiate YF&R Club, was one of the attendees. "I got involved in YF&R when I started college," said the sophomore who is following in her brother's footsteps as UMW YF&R President. "My brother was president during my senior year of high school and seeing the activities he participated in and his experiences were my selling point to getting involved."

Shirley gave the thumbs up to workshops. "The ones I attended focused on advocacy and networking. These are invaluable skills that will really help us further agriculture as well as ourselves."

She says she, "Loves this conference because of all of the networking and meeting people who love agriculture and are advocating for something that they are so passionate about."

Abby Hall, 35, and her husband, Mike, were thrilled with their opportunity to attend the national conference. They own a diversified cow/calf, horse, hogs, small grains, silage and hay farm near Havre.

Hall says receiving the YF&R Committee Scholarship made their attendance easier financially, and they were grateful for the opportunity to learn so much.

"The workshop we found especially interesting was on new legislation regarding needing prescriptions from a veterinarian before being able to feed/administer medicated supplements



MFBF YF&R Chair Gil Gasper speaks before the group.



A few of the 50 members from Montana at the National Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference.

and antibiotics to livestock," Hall said. "We are fortunate to work closely with our local vet clinic, but I can see where this will have an impact on producer, suppliers and vets."

The Halls enjoyed the North Missouri Tour which included Jowler Creek Winery, Red Barn Farms and the McCormick Distillery. "Neither of us have ever been around a winery or distillery so seeing and hearing about the process was new and interesting," Hall said. "Hearing how agriculture in another region of the United States was very interesting. We are all in the ag world/family/community but all somewhat different."

Hall said meeting so many different producers was fascinating. "We ate lunch one day at the same table as a beef raising family from Missouri and we talked about brandings. In Montana, branding is a large social event signaling the end of calving and the start of moving livestock to summer pasture and preparing for haying. It is an event that we look forward to each year. In Missouri they do not brand, so we had a good discussion."

## National YF&R Committee

Richland County Farm Bureau rancher Pat Hackley and his wife, Nicole, were selected to serve on the American Farm Bureau YF&R Committee. In March, they traveled to Washington, D.C. for their first committee meeting.

"We received leadership, media, speech and interview training from AFBF staff and industry professionals," said Pat Hackley. "We were briefed by the AFBF legal team, lobbyist and industry affairs team on pressing issues facing agriculture and spent time learning more about the Foundation for Agriculture and all our sponsors."

Pat was appointed to the promotions subcommittee and will assist teammates with social media, TV, radio and print promotions for all our programs and events within YF&R. Nicole was appointed to the leadership conference subcommittee where she will assist teammates with planning every aspect of the Fusion and YF&R leadership conference. The Hackleys are the primary contact for Montana, North Dakota and Washington states and will assist their state staff in YF&R programs and events.





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# Montana Stirrups, Sage and Shenanigans *Western Ranch Life In A Forgotten Era*

BY FRANCIE BRINK BERG, ANNE BRINK SALLGREN KRICKEL AND JEANIE BRINK THIESSEN

Everybody loves tales from the past, especially tales from ranches in the first half of the 20th century when people, cows and horses were pretty darn tough. Three sisters, who grew up on a ranch east of Miles City, realized as they went through life that they had unique and interesting stories to tell about their horses, cattle and life on the ranch primarily in the 1940s.

"In our stories of branding and trailing cattle, breaking horses, hunting and Nazi Prisoners of War in our fields, we hope the reader will recognize the traditional values we lived by, our challenges and the satisfaction of a job well done. Even though

our work could be difficult, it was also threaded through by pranks, jokes and the fun we had creating both," the sisters say in their introduction.

Indeed, these are the tales that one reads and in realize that although those times were "simple" in one way, daily life took some work, whether it was canning meat, baking bread on a fire or using a block of ice to cool milk. No Grande Latte and heated seats for these ladies.

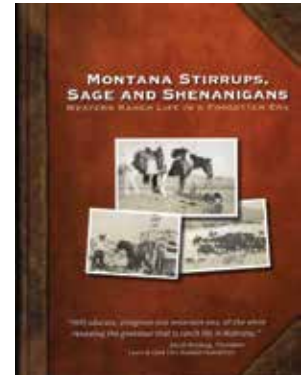
The book is a stout 408 pages with plenty of photos of simple times – catching grasshoppers in the garden—to brandings. There are many black and white photos of horses, because horses played a huge part in their work and fun. In addition to working, the ladies spent time hunting and fishing.

Chapters include Horses We Knew, Trailing Cattle, Creating Ranch Fun, Rural School, Neighbors and more. There are plenty of sidebars that might explain something like "catfish dinner" or "mobile home." What makes this book really enjoyable is the fact you can just pick it up and dive in on any page, any chapter, and learn something. There are plenty of details about farming and ranching at the time, as well as social norms, such as the Rangeland Hospitality Code.

This is the kind of book you read and hope that the determination, land stewardship, respect for livestock and wildlife, manners and respect for other people, are still a part of the social code today.

The women talk about the day they decided to do write this book, looking down on the Yellowstone from a bluff. "How fleeting were the years we spent here. The ranching style of that era, now gone. We've endeavored to capture that time and those long ago challenges with integrity, a fresh sense of adventure, and humor." They certainly have succeeded in those goals.

— Rebecca Colnar





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