

THE CATTLE CALL

Newsletter for Alumni of the TCU Ranch Management Program

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From the President

Steven Mafrige 1995

I am writing this article in early March, and rain seems to be very scarce everywhere. Hopefully everyone will start to get some much-needed rainfall soon.

I was nervous when asked to take this position, when considering the past presidents. I have started my two-year term at the same time Obama takes office. I can't say I am excited about that but I am excited to be the Alumni President. People, who know me, know that I am extremely proud of the TCU Ranch Management program. Being a part of it has made a huge impact on my life. I am excited, and hope to be able to give something back to the program. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any ideas or suggestions that you may have.

Roundup seemed to go very well. I thought the new location was great. I am sure I was not the only one reminiscing about the north side. Coming away from Roundup, one thing seemed clear; TCU and the Ranch Management program are still going strong.

Since January I have been working with other alumni on a sponsorship of the Cattle Fax meeting during the general session at the Texas Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association annual convention in Fort Worth. The TSCRA board of directors is made up of nearly 18 percent TCU Ranch Management alumni. Those directors paid for this Cattle Fax meeting sponsorship, which is one of the most heavily attended meetings at TSCRA. The sponsorship allowed us to give a brief description of the program, along with a promotional

video. Missy Bonds headed up the TCU Ranch Management Alumni social gathering at the TSCRA convention. Those of you, who were not able to attend, missed a neat event. It is wonderful to see how eager the alumni are to contribute to the program, even in the current economic times. Special thanks go out to everyone who has helped with these events. I also look forward to working with other alumni who would like to help with future events. I encourage alumni to get more involved with TSCRA, if they are able. I would like to see that percentage of alumni directors grow.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the summer roping. After hearing the details from Chris Farley, it sounds like it is going to be a great event. Hopefully everyone will start to get some much-needed rainfall, and cattle prices will start to rise soon. If any alumni could fix those two problems, it would be greatly appreciated. Once again I am honored and excited to serve as your alumni president. Please do not hesitate to contact me with comments.

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23rd Annual Summer Roping
June 12-13, 2009
College Station, Texas
See details inside.



This year's Roundup was a huge success. Saturday morning we welcomed approximately 150 alumni to the new Brown-Lupton University Union for our morning session. The speakers did a tremendous job and were very informative. The evening events, at the Stockyards Station in the historic Fort Worth Stockyards, saw a record attendance of over 300. Everyone seemed to like the new location. Based on some of the feedback from the evening, several of our alumni are trying to secure a live band for next year's event. The Alumni auction raised over \$18,000.00 for the scholarship endowment and we would like to thank everyone for their generous support. We also had the opportunity to say thank you to our outgoing alumni president, Mr. Gilly Riojas and to welcome our new alumni president, Mr. Steven Mafrige.

During the festivities we recognized Mr. James L. Powell as the Ranch Management Partners honoree for this year. The Partners award is given each year at Roundup to recognize an individual for their contributions to the agricultural industry. The student who received the Partners Scholarship this year is Mr. Daggett Arrington.

The 2009 TSCRA annual convention has come and gone. I hope that you had a chance to attend the alumni reception on Saturday evening and the Cattle-Fax session on Sunday morning.

Kyle Kacal '93 will be our host for Summer Roping. See you there!



On behalf of the Ranch Management Program and the Ranch Management Program alumni, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Mr. Gilly Riojas for serving as alumni president for the past two years.

Gilly continues to demonstrate his dedication to the Program and industry in his service to both. We have been extremely fortunate to have Gilly as our alumni president and a continued supporter of the Program. He has served in a strong leadership role and has provided us with an excellent example of commitment to the Ranch Management Program and the cattle industry. We look forward to working with him in the future. Thanks again to Mr. Gilly Riojas.

Our incoming alumni president is Mr. Steven Mafrige. I am sure you all will join us in welcoming Steven and we are equally confident Steven will continue to lead the alumni in an exemplary way.



Dry Times

I once knew a wise man whose advice about making decisions always remained the same—"Time waits for no one". It is an obvious statement, but it bears thinking about. We all know our time here is brief, and while we view a lifetime as lengthy, in the scheme of things such as drought and pestilence, the length of our lives pales in comparison.

Other learned people talk of long-term drought, and they mean tens of years. That said there have few times in my short existence, during which I can remember such dry times. As many of

you may recall, it seems in Southeast Texas anyway, where humidity starts about this time and ends in December, that Spring was a time of moisture and growth, of green and abundance, and of hope. I was recently in the midst of several large monocultures of prairie grasses, and it struck me how different the landscape was compared to my youth. I visited with a couple of experienced local producers, and, it seems their lives have left them with similar impressions.

Today, those stands of native grass struggle to begin their spring growth, even though they are not grazed. The sloughs and creeks in those heavy soils are dry, and places where a tractor and baler were easily bogged in the past are hard as pavement. Too, large cracks seem to be the order of the day. In areas where you might find a few weeds in a transect line fifteen years ago, less desirables now make up as much as 20%, even under management by the same producer. The result is a lesser stand of native plants.

In the last 20 years, it seems the rains of spring have gotten smaller and the floods that make bottomland great for grazing have gotten longer between. Producers in the mountains complain of less snow melt and irrigators from the Ogala talk of a much lower water table.

Now, I am not suggesting this is only a function of the planet getting warmer or that polar bears will perish tomorrow or that we should all start afoot to our next destination. Heck, dry times and droughts have been around long before recorded history, if we believe in things the old-timers watched, like signs of the moon, which side of the tree moss grew on, tree rings or water marks. Perhaps we are simply in the midst of a drought, similar to ones long before we were here. What's ironic is that if we are in a 30-100 year drought, at least some of us will not know it during our lifetimes. If we manage agricultural assets as though a drought is just around the corner, the last few years would have been kind to us, relatively speaking. That said, maybe our going-forward challenge is

to thrive with less. Less rain, less inputs, less labor, less.....

In closing, my friends all know that the best thing to do with any of my predictions is to "fade" them. That is, do exactly the opposite, and you will be wildly successful. So, if they are right, by the time you read this, the skies will have opened in your part of the world and "dry" will be a word of the past. Until then, may you and yours be deeply blessed.



Unique Design

All of us have probably heard or been a part of recent conversations concerning how bad the economy is and how much worse it is going to be. I would like to pose a question to you as alumni; "Is it ever as bad as they predict it is going to be?" The media tends to be drawn to the negative side of every issue because that is what human nature seems to feed off of. I propose that it will be tough but as the saying goes, "When times get tough, the tough get going." How can we survive during tough times in the ranching business? Personally, I feel agriculture is going to be okay because we are feeding the people of the world. Today, each U.S. farmer produces food and fiber for 129 people. Agriculture is the nation's largest employer, with more than 21 million people involved in some phase or another. American farmers produce 16% of the world's food on just 7 % of the world's land. Be proud to be a part of American agriculture.

It is during tough times that we as humans need to evaluate ourselves and make sure we are on the right course with our families and our work. God created every one of his animals with a unique design. To get around they hop,

(See **Unique Design** on page 3)

(Unique Design cont'd from page 2)

swim, crawl, run, walk, fly, and even slither across the ground. Does it make sense as humans for us to teach rabbits to fly, fish to run and birds to hop? Just as God made animals for different purposes, he also created each person with gifts and talents for their own unique purpose in life.

Each business or ranching operation has strengths and weaknesses from its God given natural resources. Businesses may have location, marketing, human resources, capital or other strengths that make them strong. Similarly, each ranching operation may have natural resources, facilities, genetics, personnel, or location strengths that give them that competitive edge. During lean times, cattle producers should not cut back on animal health, mineral or supplemental feed that matches the needs of the cow. However, it is time to trim the excess fat from the budget and make double sure that your cattle operation is maximizing on the natural resources of your ranching operation. Mr. John Welch of Spade Ranches always gives the class many great life and ranching lessons. This year his comment was "It's time to make sure you are staying in the middle of the road".



Tightening the Belt

Although it has almost always been common practice in any area of agribusiness, the concept of tightening the belt on any expenditures of cash has become more common nationwide in recent months. As always, this article is most likely "preaching to the choir", but a little reminder may sometimes be helpful. This is simply a short checklist of areas that managers can review, to be sure of maximum efficiency.

1. With a cattle operation, tighter economic times can give managers even more reason to cull low producers. In light of the dry winter that most of Texas and surrounding states have experienced, culling is even more critical. Hard culling now will insure more grass later. This surplus grass may give opportunities to be discussed below.

2. Efficiency on an operation becomes more important in these tighter economic times. With recent record high fuel prices and possibility of more high fuel to come, managers must take a look at all equipment operation – from pickups to tractors. Other areas to monitor for efficiency on the ranch include: labor, nutrition, freight, and the list could go on.

3. Building and utilizing a network of industry contacts can also be a help in this economy. By visiting with old classmates, industry professionals, sales representatives, and consultants, a manager can glean valuable bits of information on how others are coping with similar scenarios. This might be an area in which ranchers have an advantage over other businesses, as competitors that produce similar products will not often compare notes.

4. Seek the opportunities that may come during or following this down market. People can easily fall into the negative attitude that comes with the down economy. By maintaining a positive outlook and seeking the opportunities that arise, managers may be able to capitalize on some great ventures. The extra grass that was set aside from culling a bit tougher on the cow herd may allow a manager to take advantage of a bargain that he might not have been able to previously.

While no one has a "crystal ball," almost everyone can benefit from at least a small amount of belt tightening, efficient operation for the optimum output for a given situation.

TCU Ranch Management and TSCRA

The 132nd Annual Convention of the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association was held in Fort Worth on March 20-22, 2009. The TCU Ranch Management Program was well represented and even boasted a couple of new endeavors in conjunction with the convention this year.

A reception was hosted on Saturday evening for the TCU Ranch Management Alumni. Almost 100 alumni and guests were present to enjoy refreshments and a great time to visit and catch up with classmates. The reception demonstrated how the TCU Ranch Management Alumni are actively involved in TSCRA. The reception was sponsored by Fort Dodge Animal Health with Jeff Harbaugh and Texas Range Minerals with Gerry Cates of Albany, Texas.

Another exciting addition to this year's convention was TCU Ranch Management Alumni's sponsorship of the CattleFax Outlook session. Always a favorite for convention attendees, the CattleFax Outlook session was introduced by Alumni President Steven Mafrige followed by a short TCU Ranch Management video clip and then a the presentation by Mike Miller of CattleFax.

Other convention notes include the newly elected members of the board of directors that are also TCU Ranch Management Alumni. Congratulations to **Jamie Donnell '87**, and **Missy Bonds '01** for being newly elected to the board of directors for the TSCRA and to **Pete Bonds '73** for being elected to the Executive Committee.





ROUNDUP 2009 SPONSORS

Thanks to our sponsors and their generous contributions for helping to make our evening such a big success.

Wrangler Level

**Bayer Animal Health/TSCRA
Elanco Animal Health
Fort Dodge Animal Health
Lone Star Ag Credit**

Cowboy Level

**Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica Inc.
Global Animal Health
Land O' Lakes Purina Feed**

23rd ANNUAL SUMMER ROUNDUP



Schedule of Events

Friday - June 12, 2009

6:00 pm Pool side Party at Tonkaway Ranch with complimentary hors d'oeuvres by Red Rooster Catering (BYOB)

Saturday - June 13, 2009

8:30 am Roping at Tonkaway Ranch Arena- 16373 Tonkaway Lake Road, College Station, TX 77845

<u>Event</u>	<u>Fee</u>
Buckle Calf Roping-4 head (rope all calves)	50.00
Calf Ribbon Roping-2 head (rope all calves)	25.00
*Mixed Team Roping 3 head (progressive after 1)	30.00/Team
** Super Buckle Team Roping- 3 head (progressive after 1)	50.00/man
*** Buckle Class Team Roping- 3 head (progressive after 1)	30.00/Team

* Alumni must rope with wife or husband or son or daughter 18 and under

** Number of draws per alumni will be determined at roping (hopefully 8 partners)

For Example: You can head 4 and heel 4

You can head 8 or heel 8

*** Both ropers must be alumni from same graduating class (reverse ends are allowed)

Kids Events- Dummy Roping (Ropes Provided)
 Boot Scramble
 Moon Bounce

12:00 pm Lunch sponsored and cooked by Novartis Animal Health & Merial Animal Health

7:00 pm Saturday night Social (BYOB)
 Awards presentation

Kevin Przilas with Intervet will be donating a custom made saddle for the raffle.

