

Father, daughter follow holistic strategies

By MARGARETT WATERBURY
For the Capital Press

On Lazy R Ranch, a 1,000-acre, third-generation cattle ranch in Cheney, Wash., cattle aren't just a profitable business venture, they're a critical tool for managing the ecosystem.

Together with his daughter, Beth Robinette, rancher Maurice Robinette cares for a herd of 140 to 160 Angus cattle. All of their beef is sold directly to consumers, with most of their clients located around Spokane.

Lazy R Ranch relies on a philosophy called holistic management, a system developed by a Zimbabwean wildlife biologist and farmer named Allan Savory that views land, plants and animals as integrated and interdependent.

"Nature functions in wholes," Maurice says, "which means that everything is related to and has an impact on everything else."

Maurice's first professional encounter with ho-

listic management came in 1995, when he participated in a five-year holistic management project with Washington State University. By 1996, he had begun implementing holistic management practices on his own farm, and he quickly became an advocate and educator.

"Think about environments where predators are free to pursue large herbivores," Maurice continues. "Like Canada with caribou and buffalo, or Africa with wildebeest and zebra. The predator/prey dynamic keeps animals closely bunched and moving all the time, so they don't return to re-graze the same place. Over millions of years, grass has evolved to grow in those conditions. So when you duplicate that, grass grows better."

To that end, Lazy R Ranch uses a planned grazing system that moves cattle among pastures that range in size from just one-third acre to 150 acres. The strategy allows grass to rest a long time between grazings, at least 30

days, and sometimes up to 500 days.

Longer rests between grazing allows grasses to develop deeper roots and hold more moisture, a critical consideration in Eastern Washington, where only 15 inches of rain falls on average each year.

The system has repercussions well beyond the confines of the ranch itself. Holistic management sees pasture and grassland restoration as a powerful tool in the fight against rising atmospheric carbon. By increasing the organic matter of soil, growers can sequester carbon while increasing fertility and water retention. Over the past 15 years, Maurice says he's been able to triple the carbon content of his soil.

Now, Lazy R Ranch is also an official hub of the Savory Institute, an international nonprofit founded by the inventor of the holistic management system.

As the first hub in the U.S., Maurice regularly hosts educational groups interested in seeing holistic management principles at work. On top of all that, Maurice still plays an active role in a nonprofit



Courtesy of Lazy R Ranch

Ranchers Maurice Robinette, and daughter, Beth Robinette, with some of their herd.

called Roots of Resilience, which advocates holistic management in the North-

west. It's enough to send even the most energetic rancher searching for help — which, for Maurice, came in the form of his daughter, Beth, who returned to help run the family business a few years ago.

"Until five years ago I

was a one-man show, with occasional help from my neighbors. But now that my daughter is here, everything's working better," laughs Maurice. "I'm so glad she's here. She's coming around real good."

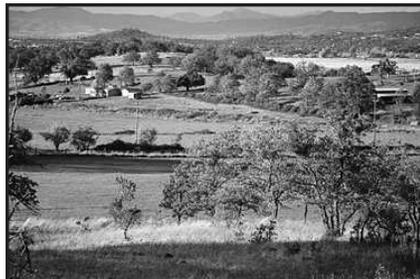
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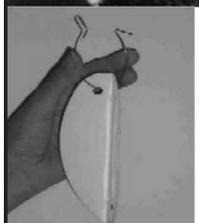
Eagle Point 26 acres with 16.8 flood irrigated acres, fenced and cross-fenced. Excellent 60'x20' hay barn with 12'x60' concrete feed apron and additional 10'x60' covered storage area on



almost 8 acres of dry ground perfect for wintering livestock. Portable panels and squeeze chute are available separately.

The house is a custom designed manufactured home with open floor plan. Newer laminate flooring and new roof in Fall 2015. 14'x14' screened porch with view of the fields and hills. Front and back landscaped yards with full RV hookup station at the house. Domestic water is from a well with a new 2000 gallon in-ground storage tank and pressure tank. **\$450,000**

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