

Cattlemen look for answers to problems

By JULIA HOLLISTER
For the Capital Press

GLENNVILLE, Calif. — Cattlemen Jack Lavers has lived and worked on his ranch in Kern County for most of his life and there are three things he hates: government regulations, negative meat publicity and snow.

First, the snow.

"I don't see myself sliding down a hill or going on a ski trip," he said. "No! Snow means feeding cattle. Snow means it's falling down the back of your neck while riding. It looks so romantic in so many old movies. But not when the truck gets stuck and you have to walk back home just to go back out and get the truck out."

He said some of his greatest and funniest memories were on those walks back home to get another truck and a chain.

He said he would dream of being a football player like Neon Deion Sanders or being a "super-rich cowboy ninja."

As he got older he started to realize what a cowboy earns, and began thinking of different careers.

Then the itch to ranch returned and income no longer mattered. He decided there is only one thing he wanted to do.

"My family established the ranch in 1858. When I got to high school, my dad made me go work for other ranchers in the area," Lavers said. "He told me that I would have to learn to be an employee before I ever could be a boss. I'd have to learn how to treat people by how I was treated by my bosses."

The experiences also broadened his perspective.

"In their operations, maybe they did something different

and more profitable than we did," he said. "Every job I have had has been a learning experience for me and my business."

The ranch is a cow/calf outfit, and the majority of the cattle are Red Angus crosses.

Lavers also raises American Quarter Horse Association horses.

He said he remembers when he was younger that they were "horse poor" and the price to buy a new horse was a tough pill to swallow. He started raising horses to make sure he would never be in that position again.

"The only thing that is unique to our operation is that every generation has bought out the previous generation," he said. "Nobody has just been given anything."

Lavers said this time of year is generally down time — putting out supplement, checking water and fences, and moving cows here and there — nothing too extreme.

But the downfall of down time is he can see what the government has done to his bottom line.



Courtesy of California Cattlemen's Association

Jack Lavers, second vice president of the California Cattlemen's Association, says government regulations and negative publicity regarding U.S. beef are hurting his industry. He is shown with daughter Reagan, 4, at their ranch in Kern County.

"Every year it gets harder and harder to be successful," he said. "The burdensome regulations are not only taking time out of an already short day, but every new regulation always finds its way into my

checking account."

He offered some examples. "Ever heard of diesel exhaust fluid? No? How about SGMA (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act)?" he said. "Wait until there is no

more hay being grown in California due to SGMA."

Lavers has another "beef."

"Outside of regulation, I think dealing with the negative publicity, from 'No Meat Mondays' to the U.N. using faulty science and climate change to call for a meat tax or the reluctance to promote American beef are the biggest obstacles for our industry," he said. "I think our marketing and beef ads seem to be lacking. Now obviously that is as overly simplified as it gets."

He contends members of the beef associations are always talking about telling their story yet they won't promote American beef. They are promoting global beef.

"The only company promoting local meat, and I say this loosely, is Wendy's," Lavers said. "They point out in their commercials that some companies bring meat all the way from Australia, but not Wendy's. Their meat comes from right here in North America. We got rid of (Country of Original Labels) and look what happened to our market."

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