

Bidding on beef

Harrell Hereford Ranch has its 43rd annual spring sale

By SAMANTHA O'CONNOR
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BAKER COUNTY — With sunshine bringing a bit of late winter warmth to Baker Valley the morning of Monday, March 7, it was a perfect day for the 43rd annual Harrell Hereford Ranch sale.

The lowing of cattle and the whinnying of horses was joined by the eager chatter of ranchers from all over the country as they mingled together, examining the bulls, heifers and horses that would go on the auction block.

The sale includes bulls, heifers and, for the 24th straight year, Harrell-Mackenzie quarter horses.

The aromas of fresh hay and wood chips mingled with the smoky scent of barbecued tri-tip greeted the Harrells' visitors. Laughter and comments of "such a nice day" drifted among the gates and barns as a couple hundred people enjoyed a lunch prior to the sale.

Mingling among the distinctively colored red-and-white Herefords, Dan Forsea, a rancher from Richland, was looking for a bull or two.

"They've got good quality cattle. Keep get-

ting better all the time," Forsea said of the Harrells' offerings.

He has attended the Harrells' annual spring auction since they started, saying he and his dad, Walt, used to come together. Dan said his father, who died on Jan. 16, 2020, always enjoyed going to the auction.

"This is a good family, too," Dan said of the Harrells. "We've known them for years and they're just a really good family. It's always great to come out here."

Edna and Bob Harrell started the Harrell Hereford Ranch along Salmon Creek, northwest of Baker City, in 1970. The family's 80-acre home ranch has expanded to include several ranches and a herd of 400 registered Hereford cows, 400 black baldy commercial cows, a 1,000-head feedlot and 25 quarter horse broodmares.

The Harrells' cattle run on 8,000 acres of native range. Edna Harrell continues to help at the ranch along with her son, Bob Harrell Jr., his wife, Becky, and their daughter, Lexie.

Bob Harrell Jr. was inducted into the Hereford Hall of Fame in Kansas City, Missouri, in October 2021.

He said he was "very pleased" with this year's sale. "The bulls were steady, the heifers were

SALE BY THE NUMBERS

The Harrell Hereford Ranch sale featured 197 lots sold, and buyers from 19 states.

Yearling bulls made up the bulk of the sales, with 107 lots sold and an average of \$5,764 per bull.

A total of 25 2-year-old bulls were sold, at an average price of \$5,298.

The top bull sold for \$23,000. Eight others sold for \$14,000 or more.

Buyers claimed 28 registered heifers, at an average price of \$4,279, and 15 commercial replacement heifers were sold at an average of \$7,262.

On the Harrell-Mackenzie quarter horse sale, 12 geldings were sold at an average of \$13,313, and 10 mares were sold at an average of \$10,300.

really good, up from last year, and the horses were outstanding."

A nationwide attraction

John Rusher from Westcliffe, Colorado, was one of the many ranchers who traveled a long distance to partake in the auction of what he called "good, high-quality Hereford bulls" and quarter horses.

Landen Doyle traveled from Dallas, Texas, where his family owns the Doyle Hereford Ranch. This was his first year visiting the Harrell Hereford Ranch.

"Always wanted to come up here and look at this ranch. Finally got



Samantha O'Conner/Baker City Herald

Ranchers gather in the sale barn at Harrell Hereford Ranch near Baker City for the annual spring auction on Monday, March 7, 2022.

the opportunity, came up here with my dad on his birthday," Doyle said.

Dan Cook, who traveled from Idaho, attended last year's auction as well, which included both in-person and online bidders.

Jerry and Inesse Parks of Aiden, California, have been traveling to the Harrell auction for a dozen years to buy horses and bulls.

After mingling with the cattle and fellow ranchers, exchanging stories and laughing, everyone made their way into the auction barn. Food and beverages were available as country music filled the air.

Then the fun began with Bob Harrell Jr.'s words of thanks to those joining and those who helped with the auction.

The auctioneer went off, words flying, and the first bulls were bought by ranchers from Nebraska,

then Virginia and North Dakota.

Assessing the beef industry

The beef business has had its ups and downs over the years, and recently, prices haven't helped much, according to some ranchers attending the Harrell sale.

"It's pretty expensive right now because of the hay. It's pretty tough to make a buck," said Cook, from Idaho.

Jerry Parks, from California, said the cattle market has gone up a bit, but it's unpredictable.

"It's up and down all the time," he said. "It seems like we never get hardly enough out of our product compared to what it gets after it leaves us. We just keep plugging along."

Forsea said inflation, which has significantly increased production costs for ranchers who depend on diesel and other petroleum

products, is making it tough for producers.

And like many ranchers, Forsea is bothered by the dominance in the meat-packing industry by four large corporations. Building more smaller, regional packing plants would give ranchers more options for selling their cattle and potentially boost prices.

The Biden administration this winter announced a campaign to encourage the construction of regional packing facilities.

"It's affecting everybody," Forsea said of inflation. "As far as the prices in the supermarkets, the cattle/calf man is seeing that difference and its packers and retailers and getting it from one place to another, fuel, and everything. But anyway, that's why we're in it for the long haul because eventually we might see a good year. So it's getting better. It's a good way of life."

Baker City Police detective remains on paid leave

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Baker City Police Det. Shannon Regan remains on paid administrative leave more than seven months after Police Chief Ty Duby removed her from active duty.

Duby made that decision in July 2021 after Jim A. Schaeffer, the La Grande attorney representing Shawn Quentin Greenwood, who was accused of first-degree murder in the January 2020 shooting death of Angela Parrish in Baker City, claimed that Regan had violated Greenwood's constitutional rights by listening to five phone calls that Greenwood, who was in the Baker County Jail, made to Schaeffer's cellphone in 2020.

On June 25, 2021, Schaeffer filed a motion seeking to dismiss all charges against Greenwood.

After hearings in Baker County Circuit Court on Aug. 13 and Aug. 24, Judge Matt Shirtcliff ruled that Regan, the lead detective in investigating the fatal shooting of Parrish, would not be allowed to testify during Greenwood's trial due to the phone call issue.

Although Shirtcliff denied Schaeffer's motion to dismiss all charges against Greenwood, the judge did prohibit Baker County District Attorney Greg Baxter from using at trial any evidence that Regan collected after Sept. 14, 2020, the day that her computer was used to access and listen to the five phone calls, according to a forensic investigation by the Oregon Department of Justice.

Baxter did not contest the claim that Regan listened to the five calls.

Greenwood, then 50, ended up pleading no con-

test to three lesser charges on Sept. 3, 2021, five days before the trial was scheduled to start. The no contest plea had the same effect as a conviction.

Shirtcliff sentenced Greenwood to a total of 90 months in prison on the three convictions: criminally negligent homicide, a Class B felony, first-degree burglary, a Class A felony, and attempting to elude law enforcement, a Class C felony.

None of the three charges for which Greenwood was convicted carries a mandatory minimum sentence, so he will be eligible for a reduction in sentence based on good behavior and other factors.

Duby said the city can't keep Regan on paid leave "indefinitely."

"It's a tough situation," Duby said. "At some point the city is going to have to move."

He said Regan, a 17-year Baker City Police officer, is at the top of the salary schedule for detectives, which has a monthly salary of \$6,066.

Duby said he has not heard anything from the Oregon Department of Justice about its investigation of Regan resulting from the phone call issue.

Baker City Manager Jon Cannon said the city is working with its attorney on how best to handle the situation with Regan.

"It's a personnel matter so I'm limited on what I can say about it," Cannon said on Thursday, March 10. "We don't want it to be an indefinite time period to have an employee in

this status. We want to respect all parties that are involved, and to take whatever actions are appropriate to resolve the matter."

Duby said Dan Thenell, a Portland attorney, is rep-

resenting Regan. Thenell had not returned a phone message by press time for this story.

In Regan's absence, Zach Thatcher is working as the department's major crimes

detective, Duby said.

Duby is now looking to replace Chris Sells, the department's other detective, who left recently to take a police job in Ada County, Idaho.



Duby

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