

People & Places

Rancher markets ag sustainability

Beth Robinette puts her background to work to help others through co-op

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

CHENEY, Wash. — Beth Robinette believes in the long-term sustainability of her family's ranch, and she has the tattoos to prove it.

She has tattoos of a steer with the cuts of beef on her arm, a cowgirl riding a bucking bull, her family ranch's brand and, on the calf of her right leg, she has several species of grasses with their root structures.

"If you're going to pick something to put on your body, you have to pick something that's really important to you, and the ranch is the thing that's most important to me in the world," she said.

Robinette is "marketing opportunities organizer" for Lazy R Ranch, which her great-grandfather began as a dairy in 1937, and her grandfather transitioned to beef production in 1950.

In the mid-1990s, her father and partner, Maurice Robinette, decided to transition to holistic livestock management, in which the rancher makes decisions based on economic and environmental factors.

"We're really focused on using our cattle as a tool to heal the landscape, support and feed our community and also make a living off of," Robinette said. "Livestock are a really important piece of land restoration."

The Robinettes keep 50 cow-calf pairs and 50 yearlings each year.

Robinette recently received a certificate from the Savory Institute, which emphasizes holistically managed



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Lazy R Ranch marketing opportunities organizer Beth Robinette stands on her family ranch April 8 near Cheney, Wash. Robinette is a firm believer in using livestock as a tool to restore land and in creating opportunities for local farmers to break into institutional markets.

Western Innovator

Beth Robinette

Age: 27

Current location: Cheney, Wash.

Family: Married, 13-year-old step-daughter

Education: Interdisciplinary major in empowering family farms and profiting from sustainability from Fairhaven College of Western Washington University, master's degree in business administration from Bainbridge Graduate Institute of Pinchot University

Websites: <http://www.lazyrbeef.com/>, [LINC Foods: http://www.lincfoods.com/about/](http://www.lincfoods.com/about/)



livestock and allows her to teach other ranchers about it. She realizes it might be a tough sell for some long-time ranchers, but Robinette foresees a shift in agriculture as older ranchers retire.

"I think the new generation taking over (is) looking to do things a little bit different," she said.

Robinette also handles the direct marketing of the ranch's grass-fed beef, primarily

selling halves, quarters and custom cuts to customers. This allows the ranch to set its prices based on expenses and not the market, she said. It's still a fairly unusual approach, she said, but interest is growing as more customers seek to know more about their food.

"There's a lot of hand-holding, because this is a totally new way of eating for a lot of people," she said. "Your typical beef consumer is used to getting something on a Styrofoam tray at the grocery store. ... There's a lot of customer education that has to happen, and you have to be willing to do that."

Robinette also helped

start a farmer- and worker-owned co-op in Spokane — called Local Inland Northwest Cooperative Foods, or LINC — to connect farmers with institutional markets such as school districts, universities and hospitals, which are typically difficult for local farmers to access.

Neighbor James Dilgard, a rancher, works with Robinette through LINC. She offers a good sounding board for ideas and shares her experiences, he said.

"She's young and enthusiastic, I think we need that back in agriculture," Dilgard said. "She's very passionate and very caring for her cows, her land and educating people."

Kids know difference between country and city smells

By **RYAN M. TAYLOR**
For the Capital Press

Cowboy Logic
Ryan Taylor



TOWNER, N.D. — Ranch kids get exposed to a lot of different scents — some good, some not-so-good. Being younger than us old folks, I suppose their sniffer is a little keener, just like their tastebuds are more sensitive than the tastebuds of oldsters like me, who pour the salt and pepper and Tabasco on our food.

Like me, our children like the country life. They share our appreciation for the smell of fresh mowed alfalfa, the juneberry and chokecherry blossoms, the Ponderosa pines and the smell of the earth after a cool rain.

A country thing

My wife likes to hang the

sheets and quilts and pillows out on our clothesline. That's a country thing, I suppose. We're far enough off the main road and we get so little traffic that they don't get chock full of road dust. They smell like a little slice of heaven when they are put back on the beds. I walked into our sons' room for bedtime prayers the other night after the bedding had been hung out and the smell of freshness actually hit me as I walked through their door. As you might imagine, that's not always the case in their room. No matter how hard they try, I don't think anyone can put that smell in a dryer sheet or stick it in a bottle of laundry detergent.

I must've taught our kids to like the smell of horses because I'm not sure that's a completely natural reaction to the smell of a sweaty horse with the saddle just removed. Cattle have a smell, too, and they don't mind that. The ranch dog has a particular odor if he found something dead to roll in or drag into the yard. That one we tend to avoid.

Other odors

But I've never heard them complain much about other strong odors. The smell of gasoline on my hands if I've been using gas to wash the grease off some grimy parts. The smell of diesel if I'm not paying attention when I fill the tractor and it overflows a bit onto the hood. The odor from the ear tag ink pen when I'm making ear tags for the calves in the pickup. Of course, I do

open the windows to ventilate those unhealthy smells.

When we're hauling manure out of the corrals, spreading it out on the fields and adding some natural nutrients to the pastures, they don't even wrinkle up their noses.

That's why we were so surprised when my wife and I got dressed up to go to a film festival in Bismarck. We packed up the family. They were going to get to see one of their favorite old babysitters while we went to see the films and go to the event afterwards.

What stinks?

We had just shut the doors on the car when our 8-year-old said, rather indignantly, "Why does it always stink in here when you guys get dressed up to go somewhere?!" In his mind, he was trying to figure out the correlation between

Mom and Dad getting all gussied up, and the smell in the otherwise neutral-smelling habitat of the family car.

We both laughed when we realized what he was talking about. I guess we don't wear perfume and cologne that much in our daily ranch life. But splash and sprinkle a little of that on for a night on the town and it was more than his youthful sniffer could bear in the confines of the car.

I'm not sure if "stink" was a word used to market either her perfume or my cologne, but that's the new descriptor we'll be thinking about the next time we get dressed up.

And we'll know the opinion of at least one member of our family who ranks the offense of the "going-to-town" odor somewhere beyond the bearable things like horse sweat, manure spreading or spilled diesel.

Calendar

Friday, April 24

Forestry Map and Compass Workshop, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., University of Idaho Extension Office, Coeur d'Alene.

Saturday, April 25

Sheep Days, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Oakville Regional Event Center, Oakville, Wash., 360-239-3828. Sheep, alpaca and llama shearing during weekend. Bring your animals for shearing, foot trim and drenching.

Oregon AgFest, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem.

Sunday, April 26

Sheep Days, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Oakville Regional Event Center, Oakville, Wash., 360-239-3828. Sheep, alpaca and llama shearing during weekend. Bring your animals for shearing, foot trim and drenching.

Oregon AgFest, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem.

Monday, April 27

AgChat Foundation Regional Meeting, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights, Wash.

Tuesday, April 28

AgChat Foundation Regional Meeting, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Northern Quest Casino, Airway Heights, Wash.

Oregon Blueberry Commission Budget Hearing, noon-2 p.m. Chemeketa Events at Winema, Salem, 503-364-2944.

Friday, May 1

Forest Landowners of California Annual Meeting, 8 a.m. Holiday Inn, Auburn, Calif.

Saturday, May 2

Forest Landowners of California Annual Meeting, 8 a.m. Holiday Inn, Auburn, Calif.

Wednesday, May 6

Roots of Resilience, Rejuvenating Grasslands through Grazing Management, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Washington Family Ranch, Antelope, Ore., 360-220-5103. On May 6, attend our Grazing Conference to Create Resilience, Improve Production, Increase Profit and Enhance Quality of Life.

Thursday, May 7

Roots of Resilience, Rejuvenating Grasslands through Grazing Management, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Washington Family Ranch, Antelope, 360-220-5103. Learn detailed information on Planned Grazing, Placing the animals in the right place at the right

time for the right reason or Learn about the importance of Monitoring — Are you taking full advantage of your most scare resource — rainfall?

Saturday, May 9

Garden Expo 2015, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Spokane Community College, Spokane, Wash., 509-535-8434. Over 250 garden-related vendors, gardenexpo@comcast.net, www.tieg.org

Wednesday, May 13

19th annual Distillers Grains Symposium, 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Sheraton Crown Center, Kansas City, Mo.

Thursday, May 14

19th annual Distillers Grains Symposium, 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Sheraton Crown Center, Kansas City.

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