

People & Places

A family tradition of efficiency

Justin Hedrick, his uncle and grandfather look to reduce expenses

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

PLYMOUTH, Wash. — The Diamond M Ranch recently started a different way of weaning calves.

The ranch used to wean its calves at a feedlot, said Justin Hedrick, partner in the ranch with his grandfather, Len McIrvine, and uncle, Bill McIrvine.

"We just started weaning them the last few years by ourselves, move cows into a new wheat or green circle with the cows, give them a couple of days, that way they know it's home," Hedrick said. "Then you go in, preg-check the cows, and then haul the cows away and leave the calves there. They know that's home and they don't try going anywhere."

Hedrick said the change has saved "huge amounts" of money.

"We'd have calves in the feedlot for \$2 to \$2.50 per day per calf," he said. "They'd be in there for 30 days per herd. Being on circles, we can wean them ourselves for 37 cents per day. It's made a huge economic difference for us."

It's the latest move by a long-running ranching family with a history of striving for — and achieving — efficiency.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press

Grandfather, Len McIrvine, and grandson, Justin Hedrick, pause from doing maintenance on one of their cattle trucks April 13 on property in Plymouth, Wash. McIrvine and Hedrick are partners with Bill McIrvine in the Diamond M Ranch. Hedrick is also president of the Stevens County Cattlemen's Association.

In 1973, Diamond M was one of the first ranches to start bringing cattle from northern-tier counties to southern Washington for wintering, now a relatively common practice. The ranch retains ownership of all its cattle from calving to slaughter. The ranch was also one of the first in the area to own cattle-hauling semi trucks.

"We will definitely look at any new and improved methods, but also we're real skeptical," Len McIrvine said. "If they're the right kind of cows, there's a lot of things the feed companies, mineral companies and technology companies say you've got to have

that really you don't."

"(For branding), we can run the same number of calves with a four- or five-man crew as a lot of people can with a 30-man crew," Hedrick said.

Hedrick joined the operation in about 2011. All three partners stress that they are equals.

"It's 'we,' not 'I,'" Len McIrvine said.

"It's 'us,' rather than a 'me,'" Hedrick agreed.

Len McIrvine's grandfather started the ranch. He is the third generation on the ranch, Bill McIrvine is the fourth and Justin is the fifth. They expect to breed roughly 3,000 head this year and calve more than

2,000 head, and run a total of 6,000 to 7,000 head.

Kettle Falls, Wash., rancher Scott Nielsen, vice president of the Cattle Producers of Washington, said the Diamond M is always the first affected by industry issues.

"They're principled, they're not compromisers," he said. "They're in it 100 percent. ... They are an outfit making it simply on their own skin — good times, bad times, whatever else."

Nielsen said Hedrick shows a lot of passion for the industry and will take a leadership role on key issues as president of the Stevens County Cattlemen's Association.



Western Innovator

Justin Hedrick

Age: 29

Title: Partner, Diamond M Ranch; president, Stevens County Cattlemen's Association

Hometown: Laurier, Wash.

Family: Married, two sons, one daughter

Education: Chewelah High School

Website: <https://stevens-countycattlemen.com>

"We're an aging industry — there aren't too many young people involved," he said. "You want a guy like Justin who is president of the organization and tells exactly how (a regulation) will affect his cows out on the landscape."

"We're always open to reading and finding something that's going to be more efficient," Hedrick said. "We've got 73 years of learning how to be the most efficient we can be on our ranch. What we have right now is probably the most efficient we could have as of today."

Growing hazelnuts runs in the Aman family

By BRENNA WIEGAND
For the Capital Press

MT. ANGEL, Ore. — When World War II broke out, two of Frank Aman's five boys stayed back to work the family farm just outside Mt. Angel, Ore.

"After the war my Uncle Gordy and my dad, Russel, came back, and Grandpa Frank said, 'It's these boys' turn to take the farm over,'" Tom Aman said.

Russel Aman's sons Tom, Tim and Kevin grow and propagate hazelnuts on the same land their father and grandfather farmed. Now as then, many other family members take part in the farm's operation.

They grow hazelnuts on the 70 acres of the home place and sharecrop another 120 acres in the neighborhood, averaging 3,000 pounds per acre. Tim is an agronomist for Hazelnut Growers of Oregon; Kevin and Tom are agronomists for Wilco Farmers Co-op.



Brenna Wiegand/For the Capital Press

Tim Aman, left, and his brother, Tom, stand among year-old hazelnut trees in a greenhouse at their Mt. Angel, Ore., hazelnut farm. Shown are the choice new blight-resistant varieties from Oregon State University Wepster, McDonald and Jefferson.

The trees the Aman brothers produce through tissue culture at the Century Farm are blanketing the Willamette Valley at a rate of 800 to 1,000 acres a year, but it's still not fast enough to keep up with the demand for Oregon hazelnuts.

At the same time, older orchards across the valley that should continue to produce for decades to come are succumbing to eastern filbert blight.

"At least now we have something to replace them with," Tim said.

For the past three decades Shawn Mehlenbacher at Oregon State University has been developing blight-resistant hazelnut varieties.

"The best hazelnut varieties in the world are coming out of Oregon State," Tom said. "We've got quite the gem down there."

McDonald, grown for its

kernel, is one of the best tasting nuts yet and drops two weeks earlier than Barcelona, he said. Other promising varieties include Wepster, a kernel nut, and Jefferson, a robust in-shell variety.

Oregon provides 99 percent of the hazelnuts in the U.S., though Turkey supplies 70 percent of the world market. Both provide the perfect environment for growing hazelnuts.

"If you shoot a line from here to the other side of the world you'll hit Turkey," Tom said. "The 45th parallel with a marine influx is premier for growing hazelnuts."

Eight to 10 years ago a massive freeze in Turkey created a worldwide hazelnut shortage. The standard 45 cents a pound in Oregon shot to \$1.15. A second freeze in 2014 saw record prices — \$2 a pound in the shell. Prices are not expected to dip under a dollar for the foreseeable future.

China depends on ha-

zelnuts for festivals such as Chinese New Year. They soak the nuts to soften the shell, split them individually, soak them in brine and roast them, causing them to open like pistachios.

"They're fun to eat and they really taste good — I'd love to see that at an OSU game," Tim said.

Recently the Mars Inc. candy company's main nut buyers paid a visit and met with HGO officials.

"You're talking millions and millions of pounds," Tim said.

The Amans recommend hazelnuts to large- and small-scale farmers alike.

"It's a sustainable crop," Tim said. "You're not working the ground; there are very few pests and there's not a big outlay for equipment. They're mechanically harvested so your cost for labor is way down, and these new varieties have very upright scaffolding so they're very easy to manage."

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To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on "Submit an Event." Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Friday, June 17

Going Further on the Bio-Control Bus: Advanced Biological Pest Management for Nurseries & Greenhouses, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Advanced biological control workshop and tour/demonstration. This day is limited to a grower audience with some experience. OSU North Willamette Research & Extension Center, 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora, Ore. Cost: \$35. http://www.pesticide.org/advanced_biological_pest_2016

Pruning to Restore White Pine workshop in Sandpoint, Idaho. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Pre-register by June 10. Registration fee is \$20. (208) 263-8511 <http://extension.uidaho.edu/bonner/>

Saturday, June 18

ATFS 75th Anniversary Celebration, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Celebrating 75 years of sustainable forestry and honoring tree farmers. Montesano High School and Lake Sylvia State Park, Montesano, Wash. www.wa-farmforestry.com

Ketchum Kalf Rodeo, 1 p.m., Glenwood Rodeo Grounds, 63

Trout Lake Highway, Glenwood, Wash. <http://Business.gorge.net/glenwoodrodeo>

Tractor-Truck-Garden Tractor Pull. This is the Oregon Tractor Pullers Association's annual Father's Day pull, all tractors are welcome. Venue: Schurman's Iron Ranch, Ridgefield, Wash. www.oregontractorpullers.com

Sunday, June 19

Ketchum Kalf Rodeo, 1 p.m., Glenwood Rodeo Grounds, 63 Trout Lake Highway, Glenwood, Wash. <http://Business.gorge.net/glenwoodrodeo>

Wednesday, June 22

Idaho Cattle Association Summer Roundup, Red Lion Templin's Hotel on the River, 414 E. First Ave., Post Falls, Idaho. www.idahocattle.org/

Promoting Beneficial Insects, 6-8 p.m. Oregon State University Extension, SOREC, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Learn the technical details of designing and establishing plantings that promote beneficial insects, including annual and perennial insectary plantings. Cost: \$20 each or \$30 per couple. Register online or call 541-776-7371. <https://secure.oregonstate.edu/osuext/register/1012>

Thursday, June 23

Idaho Cattle Association Sum-

mer Roundup, Red Lion Templin's Hotel on the River, 414 E. First Ave., Post Falls, Idaho. www.idahocattle.org/

Friday, June 24

Alpacas at the Gathering, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas join the sheep and goats at the Black Sheep Gathering, with fleece, yarn, socks, scarves and more. Fleece show as part of BSG Wool Show & Sale. Lane County Events Center, 796 W 13th Ave., Eugene, Ore. Cost: free. www.alpacafarmsoregon.org

Saturday, June 25

Washington State Dairy Ambassador Coronation, 5 p.m. Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center, 1500 Broadway, Tacoma, Wash. 360-273-7313. Tickets will not be available at the door.

Alpacas at the Gathering, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas join the sheep and goats at the Black Sheep Gathering, with fleece, yarn, socks, scarves and more. Fleece show as part of BSG Wool Show & Sale. Lane County Events Center, 796 W 13th Ave., Eugene, Ore. Cost: free. www.alpacafarmsoregon.org

Sunday, June 26

Alpacas at the Gathering, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Alpacas join the sheep and goats at the Black Sheep Gathering, with fleece, yarn, socks, scarves and more. Fleece show as part of BSG Wool Show & Sale.

Lane County Events Center, 796 W 13th Ave., Eugene, Ore. Cost: free. www.alpacafarmsoregon.org

Wednesday, June 29

OSU Canberry Field Day, 1-5 p.m., North Willamette Research & Extension Center, 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora, Ore. <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC/>

Thursday, June 30

St. Paul Rodeo, St. Paul, Ore. 1-800-237-5920. www.stpaulrodeo.com/

Friday, July 1

St. Paul Rodeo, St. Paul, Ore. 1-800-237-5920. www.stpaulrodeo.com/

Molalla Buckeroo Rodeo, Molalla, Ore. 503-829-8388. <http://molalabuckeroo.com>

Eugene Pro Rodeo, 4 p.m. to midnight, 90751 Prairie Road, Eugene, Ore. <http://www.eugenepro-rodeo.com/>

Saturday, July 2

St. Paul Rodeo, St. Paul, Ore. 1-800-237-5920. www.stpaulrodeo.com/

Molalla Buckeroo Rodeo, Molalla, Ore. 503-829-8388. <http://molalabuckeroo.com>

Eugene Pro Rodeo, 4 p.m. to midnight, 90751 Prairie Road, Eugene, Ore. <http://www.eugenepro-rodeo.com/>

Sunday, July 3

St. Paul Rodeo, St. Paul, Ore. 1-800-237-5920. www.stpaulrodeo.com/

Molalla Buckeroo Rodeo, Molalla, Ore. 503-829-8388. <http://molalabuckeroo.com>

Eugene Pro Rodeo, 5:30 to 11 p.m., Prairie Road, Eugene, Ore. <http://www.eugenepro-rodeo.com/>

Monday, July 4

St. Paul Rodeo, St. Paul, Ore. 1-800-237-5920.

Molalla Buckeroo Rodeo, Molalla, Ore. 503-829-8388.

Eugene Pro Rodeo, 4 p.m. to midnight, 90751 Prairie Road, Eugene, Ore.

Wednesday, July 6

OSU Blueberry Field Day, 1-5 p.m. North Willamette Research & Extension Center, 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora, Ore. <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/NWREC/>

Thursday, July 7

Marion County Fair, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem. 503-585-9998. <http://www.co.marion.or.us/CS/Fair>

Friday, July 8

California State Fair, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento, 916-263-FAIR. <http://www.castatefair.org/>

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Correction

The story on Page 8 of the June 10 edition on the defeat of a bill in the California Assembly that would have changed overtime rules for agricultural employees incorrectly identified the bill's author. She is Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego. The Capital Press regrets the error.

Correction policy

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We want to publish corrections to set the record straight.