

Brothers raise cattle for high desert

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

The Duckett brothers grew up on a ranch in Oregon, went to college, then worked at other jobs.

A few years later they decided they wanted their families and children to have the same opportunities they had as kids, growing up on a ranch.

Matt Duckett purchased some registered cows in 2005, and they went into partnership on an Idaho ranch in 2007. Their cows are wintered along the Snake River and summered near Cascade and Donnelly, Idaho.

"In 2007 Adam and I started acquiring registered cows from some of the best purebred Angus and Hereford operations in the western U.S.," Matt said.



Courtesy of the Duckett family

Duckett family photo taken at South Mountain Ranch near Melba, Idaho.

Their objective is to raise cattle that will work in the high desert environment.

"In our program, three-quarters of our cow herd is Angus and one-quarter

is Hereford," he said. "We also farm in Canyon and Owyhee counties, raising forage, row crops and seed crops and do custom haying and straw baling."

In 2014 they built a backgrounding lot on one of their places near Melba.

"We grow a lot of feed, and can feed cattle fairly reasonably," Matt said. They background cattle for some

South Mountain Ranch

Owners: Matt and Adam Duckett

Headquarters: Melba, Idaho

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of the best cattle feeders in the Northwest.

"Our long-term goal is to feed some of our bull customers' calves and gather data on how these calves perform in the feedlot. We'll use that information to help us improve our genetic selection," he said.

The breeding program includes artificial insemination and embryo transfer, using proven sires to produce cattle that excel on the ranch, in the feedlot and on the rail.

"We want to provide genetics our customers need to be competitive and profitable," he said.

"The genetics we select will also be our future females — our bull-making factories. The main crite-

ria when evaluating sires is whether we'll be happy with their daughters when they go into our herd," he said. "If a bull doesn't pass that test we don't look at him any farther."

This is a family operation. "Adam and I started from scratch. This coming year will be our ninth season selling bulls."

Their sale is the second Tuesday in February and is held at the ranch. Many of the bulls go to the same customers who have bought them the past nine years.

Matt and Adam are involved in the cattle industry. Matt is treasurer of the Idaho Cattle Association. Adam serves on the board of directors for the Owyhee Cattlemen's Association and is on the board of directors of Leadership Idaho Agriculture. They have gone to Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional delegations to advocate for agricultural issues.

"The last three years at our bull sale we donated a regis-

tered Angus heifer and auctioned her off to raise money for the Idaho Cattle Association and Owyhee Cattlemen's Association. We also asked local businesses to make donations or buy the heifer and sell her again to raise more money," Matt said.

They've raised \$40,000 for the Owyhee 68 litigation, which involves a challenge of 68 grazing permits in that county.

"These are important issues for our friends and neighbors and impact many of our customers," he said.

Matt and his wife, Pyper, have four children. Adam and his wife, Stephanie, have three. The kids enjoy the ranch, helping with cattle, farming and other chores.

Adam and his family live at their ranch south of Marsing, near Melba, along the Snake River. Matt and his family live on the Canyon County side of the river. Matt oversees the purebred operation while Adam handles the farming and the feedlot.

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