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# Dairy/Livestock

## Young family enjoys ranching lifestyle

By ANGEL CARPENTER  
EO Media Group

DAYVILLE, Ore. — Brandon and Sydney Thompson keep busy, raising four young children with a ranching way of life.

As soon as 10-year-old Ethan and 8-year-old Tyler step off the school bus, they load up in the pickup with their parents and younger siblings, Carson, 4, and McKenzie, 3, to feed cattle.

Sydney said that's the best thing, ranching together as a family.

During haying season, it is not unusual to see Brandon and Sydney driving tractors, carting two children each in the cabs as they rake fields.

"That's pretty much how it works," Sydney said. "It's really a good time to just talk to your kids and find out what's going on their life."

When other ranchers visit, "they'll say, 'I remember when our kids were little, and we were doing the same thing,'" she said.

Sydney said there are many things she enjoys about ranching in Dayville, including the good weather and the community. She said most of her boys' classmates also have families who ranch and farm.

"They get together and help their friends when it's time to brand, and they help us," she said.

Brandon works full-time as a wildlife technician for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and he and Syd-



The Thompson family pauses after feeding cattle on March 9 in Dayville, Ore. In the front, from left, are Sydney, 3-year-old McKenzie and Brandon. In the back are Carson, Tyler and Ethan.

Photos by Angel Carpenter/EO Media Group



Three of the Thompson kids ride horses on March 9 at their Dayville, Ore., home before going out to feed the cattle. From left are Ethan, Carson and McKenzie Thompson.

ney share ranching duties.

They run Angus-cross cattle for the Auxier Ranch, which includes some of their own cattle, and they also have cattle on leased land, working

about 200 head in all.

The couple have lived in Dayville for 10 years. Both grew up on ranches, Brandon in North Powder and Sydney in Northern California, and

ethic out of it," he said. "It gets them out of the house, and you can turn work into fun if you do it right."

Some of the duties for the older boys include helping feed cattle and moving pipes, as well as assisting when tags and vaccinations are done.

Ethan likes to practice roping, and he showed a 4-H hog last year for the first time at the Grant County Fair.

Brandon said his kids are given their own cows when they earn it and, after caring for the animals, enjoy receiving a calf check at the end of the year.

Sydney said some of their best times together, and a favorite for her boys, have been being on horseback in the summertime to check on cattle spread over 20,000 acres, sometimes having a family campout.

The Thompsons have faced their share of challenges, along with other Grant County ranchers, including drought conditions, low sales prices and a higher death loss with calves.

When a winter cold snap hit, the family frequently brought newborn calves in their home to warm up by the wood stove.

During haying season, Brandon said it's not unusual for him to punch in a 20-hour day.

"It's not always gravy train," he said. "Everything has its challenges. There are a lot of struggles. It's just a good way of life in my mind."

both of their dads worked full-time at other jobs while ranching, receiving lots of help from family. Sydney said ranching followed Brandon, and he started doing some side jobs.

"I told him, if you're going to do this, we have to be really involved, so we can spend time together," she said.

"That's the kicker for me," Brandon said, adding if they didn't work it out that way, they'd never see each other.

"It works out pretty well, and it's a good way to teach your kids that there is more to life," Sydney said.

"We pray as a family for rain or for calves to get better, and they see the results," she said. "It's kind of a 'faith-based' business."

Brandon said he appreciates the value of hard work his children are learning.

"They get a good work

## The organic, juniper-seeking goats of Silvies Valley

Goats easy on riparian areas, work well with cattle

By RYLAN BOGGS  
EO Media Group

SENECA, Ore. — A Peruvian goat herder opens a barn door to release a flood of brown and white Boer goats.

He steps out of the way as the goats swarm to several cut juniper trees in their pen. Like piranhas, they will pick the trees clean in a matter of hours.

Once put out on rangeland, the goats will seek and destroy junipers, eating the foliage as high as they can reach.

"It's like candy," Silvies Valley Ranch owner Sandy Campbell said.

The ranch, just south of Seneca, Ore., started a goat herd to establish an additional source of income from the same rangeland on which the cattle graze.

Goats can graze the same pastures as cattle and don't share parasites. While cattle focus on grasses, goats are drawn to shrubs and bushes.

The animals are great at brush and weed control, according to Campbell, which helped the ranch avoid chemical weed control and become certified organic.



Photos by Rylan Boggs/EO Media Group

A Boer goat looks up from feeding at Silvies Valley Ranch. The ranch started the goat herd to establish an additional source of income from the same rangeland as cattle.

"We've really been impressed by how well the goats work with the cattle," Campbell said. "They have improved the rangeland in a lot of places by getting rid of the weeds and cleaning up the underbrush in our forest areas. It's been really good for fire suppression."

While grazing, the goats are managed by three Peruvian goat herders working under temporary agricultural visas, Campbell said.

"They're very knowledgeable and great herdsman and

hard workers," she said, adding that it's hard to find experienced goat herders in the U.S.

Border collies help the herders, while Great Pyrenees mountain dogs protect the goats from coyotes and raptors.

Originally from South Africa, the heavier Boer goats were initially bred as show animals in the U.S., which removed many desirable range goat traits.

Since then, Campbell has been working to breed



Goats jockey for position as they feed on a juniper tree at Silvies Valley Ranch. The animals are great at brush and weed control, according to ranch owner Sandy Campbell.

them back into "the Angus of goats."

They've crossbred them with some Spanish goats and another South African breed called Kalahari red. The goal is to develop their own breed of hybrid range goat.

"We're breeding for big babies that hit the ground strong and grow really well on range," Campbell said.

The goats spend the majority of their lives on rangeland but are brought into barns during the winter months. When in labor, mothers are brought indoors and give birth onto heated floors where they

stay with their offspring for one to two days. They then move to the family pens and, when ready, back out to the winter barns.

The kids normally double their birth weight in the first month of life, Campbell said.

Goat meat, or chevon, is catching on in restaurants and health food circles because it is high in nutrients and low in fat, Campbell said.

The meat will be a staple on the menu at the Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch when it opens in July, and they hope to sell chevon locally in the future.

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