

# Rancher's move to California pays off

By JULIA HOLLISTER  
For the Capital Press



Hugo Klopper

Rancher Hugo Klopper realized at an early age that Northern California was a much better place for a future than his home in Zimbabwe.

"I was born and raised in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and came from a farming background in Africa," he said. "My mom married Bill McBride, a third-generation rancher, in 1983. They met in Africa on a blind date set up by mutual friends.

Klopper was still in high school at the time, and because of the politics in Zimbabwe he decided to make his future in California.

"I have been managing our Bonanza and Seattle ranches (Bear River Valley Beef in Humboldt County) for over 25 years, which belong to my stepfather," Klopper said.

Klopper and his family — his wife, Elizabeth, and three sons — raise mainly Red Devons, a British breed from Devonshire. The calves are raised alongside their mothers until about 9 months old, when they are then weaned and moved to new pastures to continue growing.

The growth stage from weaned calf to finished grass-fed cattle is about 12-16 months. He said eating only grass is a time-consuming method to finish cattle, but healthy for the cattle and the land.

Elizabeth Klopper has a Cooper Institute certificate in nutrition and kinesiology and runs the farm office, taking care of online clients, shipping orders, and marketing as well as helping with various projects on the ranch.

"After running a traditional cow/calf operation for many years and establishing a superior cow herd whose calves were sold into the commodity market, I realized that I could provide a much better product and service by retaining ownership of the cattle and provide a 100 percent grass-fed product with a focus on consistent quality," Klopper said. "Raising animals on pasture with 'all grass, all the time' will always be the gold standard."

He says there is no average day. Every day is different, depending on ranch projects that need completing. Klopper is currently installing more water storage and fencing to better manage feed production, which are limiting factors on increasing production.

"I would advise anyone

to get into ranching in spite of the hurdles," he said. "Sure, it is tough to get into because there is such a high cost on infrastructure, land, cattle for what you get on the return. Regulations are a challenge, too. It has been estimated that in California regulation costs to the industry run 25 percent higher than businesses in neighboring states."

In addition to running the ranches, he has been a board member for the local Humboldt and Del Norte County Cattlemen's Association for 10 years, president of the association for 2 years, state representative for the county for 4 years and one of nine zone directors in the state for 4 years. He currently is on the executive committee of the state association and is a board member on the local resources conservation district board.

When asked if he ever wanted to have another career, he replied, "Yes, to be fishing!"

# Fall calving works best for Bar 6 Charolais

By HEATHER SMITH THOMAS  
For the Capital Press

Most purebred breeders keep their cattle close to home for breeding and calving.

A few, however, run their registered cattle in bigger pastures and rougher conditions, similar to their customers' ranch environments.

Jim Anspach has been raising registered Charolais since 1989. His 350 cows run on 100,000 deeded acres in Eastern Oregon. He only uses half the ranch each year, and allocates about 250 acres per cow for 10 months of grazing.

Bar 6 Charolais ranch headquarters near Mitchell, Ore., on the John Day River is at 1,300 feet of elevation, with 350 acres of irrigated ground for haying. When the cattle go to grass they may go up to 6,000 feet in timbered country. Grass in the high country stays green into July whereas lower regions dry out quicker.

"We fall calve, which works best for us," Anspach said. "We spring calved when we moved here, but with green



Courtesy Photo

Bar 6 Charolais ranch headquarters is near Mitchell, Ore., on the John Day River.



Jim Anspach

The cows were calving during green-up and with all that good feed they produced too much milk for young calves to handle. Baby calves don't eat much grass yet, so this wasn't an efficient use of grass. By the time those calves got big enough to eat grass, it was dried up.

Switching to fall calving also worked better for breed-

up. Even though the cows only use half the ranch each year, it's still a large area with cows scattered over 70 square miles. This made it challenging to get them all bred.

Now most of the calves are born in October. The cattle are on hay meadows during winter and by the time they are turned out on range the cows are all bred, and have a 250-300-pound calf at side that can utilize the green grass. Calves are weaned in late July-early August and some of the bull calves coming off that dry country are close to 800 pounds. This makes the most efficient use of the range.

"We've had very few calving problems," Anspach said. "The best thing we ever did was let them start calving out where they couldn't be watched or helped. This sorts out most problems and in the long run saves a lot of money, time and labor. Some outfits have all their cows and heifers under their bedroom window and are helping them calve. That's not the way to raise problem-free cattle."

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