

Heglar Creek Farms expands with the family

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

Josh Webb and family have a dairy and beef operation, farm several crops and operate a handful of other enterprises at their Heglar Creek Farms near Declo, Idaho.

The dairy got its start in Utah.

"I am the fifth generation in our family dairy," Webb says. His grandfather moved the dairy from Utah to Idaho in the late 1970s.

"We acquired more ground and are now milking 2,000 cows. We've diversified, but the dairy is the component that drives the rest of the growth, enabling us to have a consistent monthly income," he explains.

"Family members have a calf ranch and a finishing yard where we finish Holstein and Angus calves. With those enterprises, our heifer program and dairy, we have 10,000 cattle on feed right now. We also have a beef cow-calf herd," he says.

"We acquired a neighbor's farm and sod business four years ago and deliver sod April through November. At the peak, we're sending out 5 semi loads of sod each day," Webb says.

The other two family busi-



Josh Webb and family have a dairy and beef operation, farm multiple crops and have other enterprises near Declo, Idaho.

Courtesy Photo

nesses are electrical contracting and a milking robotics dealership.

"We have 20 electricians working for us. We are also building a 1,100-cow barn that is fully robotic and automated. It should be up and running this summer," he says.

"A lot of the diversification has been driven by my generation coming back to the farm. Our family made the decision long ago that we

wouldn't just stay the same and try to support more families. If I or my cousins wanted to come back, we'd have to branch out — each individual pursuing his or her own businesses," he explains.

"My brother Justin went to school, became an electrician and started his own business. My brother Eric worked somewhere else after college and now runs our sod operation," Webb says.

"The farm has four part-

ners — my dad Mark, two of his brothers, Scott and Todd, and business partner Mike Garner, who is a neighbor," he says. "We've been partners with Mike for 20 years. The partners are now selling the business to us (the next generation) and it's me and my two brothers, and Nathan Garner, the son of our business partner."

Nathan runs the row-crop farming operation.

"He raises all the crops for

the cattle and I manage the cows. He and I work well together," Webb says.

"We have phenomenal employees. We have a key guy at the feedlot and calf ranch, and two key guys at the dairy. I just provide support to the management team because they know a lot more than I do and are extremely good at what they do," he says.

The dairy cows are Holsteins.

"We've been doing (artificial insemination) as long as I can remember and have phenomenal genetics. In the past we sold a few heifers but mainly we've been growing our own dairy," he says. "When we started building our new robotic facilities I started using more sexed semen, to build numbers. Our breeding program is for Holstein heifers with sexed semen, and every cow that doesn't get sexed semen is bred to a Charolais or Lim-Flex (Limousin-Angus) bull, for calves for our own feedlot.

They have a grower yard and a finishing yard and buy day-old Holstein bull calves from two neighboring dairies.

"We always have between 1,500 and 1,800 calves on bottles at our calf farm — a

full-time job for several people," he says.

A sixth generation is also coming on.

"My wife, Tara, and I have five children: Brytten, Macy, Paige, Grant and Dawson," he says. "Our oldest is 14 and she likes the beef cows. The youngest two are boys and they love the dairy. In our business we've set rules for coming back into the operation. They need a college education and some work experience outside the business."

Webb worked as a banker before returning to the farm.

"I was in ag lending for seven years. My brother who runs our sod farm worked with a manufacturing company in Utah that built haying equipment," he says. "We encourage all family members to go on to school and get a job somewhere, especially in some field that will benefit the operation when they come back."

Their success is due to everyone working together. It takes hard work, and the right attitude.

"When people come looking for a job, I tell them that if they know how to work hard, I will hire them," he says. "I don't care whether they know anything. If they are willing to work, I know I can teach them the rest."

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