

Red Angus genetics for the real world

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

In 2014 Josh Dykes and Seth Leachman joined forces to create their 9 Mile Ranch program in southeastern Washington.

They met when Dykes purchased Red Angus cattle 27 years ago at Leachman Cattle Company. When Leachman's dispersed in 2003, Seth continued to manage some of the Red Angus top production sales, and marketing bulls for Dykes.

"I solicited Seth when I acquired the historic 9 Mile Ranch at Touchet, Wash., 5 years ago," Dykes said. "The ranch is 16,000 deeded acres of native grass that provides winter and spring range. We acquired an additional 38,000 acres for sum-



9 Mile Ranch

Josh Dykes and Seth Leachman partnered to run the historic 9 Mile Ranch in southeastern Washington. The operation runs 800 to 1,000 registered Red Angus and Red Angus-Simmental hybrids.

mer grazing on the mid-River and added 3 ranches at the fork of the John Day Joseph, Ore."

until mid-October. Cows are wintered at the 400-foot elevation and summer as high as 7,500 feet. This means mild winters, and good summer grass.

"We run purebred cattle in large range pastures. They sometimes travel 5 miles to water, just like many of the large commercial herds in this area. We're doing this with purebred registered calves, composites and hybrids. They all go through the same system our commercial cows do," Dykes said.

The operation runs 800 to 1,000 registered Red Angus and Red Angus-Simmental hybrids. The plan is to eventually produce some three-breed composite bulls.

These cows are on grass year-round. "We feed very little hay most winters and calve in January/February out on the range," he said. Cattle work is done on horseback.

"We use all the tools of our industry such as genomics, EPDs, DNA testing,

performance testing, ultrasound, feed efficiency testing, but the environment dictates what our cattle will be. Parentage of each calf is determined by DNA," Dykes said.

Leachman says the cattle have to be sound, with good feet and structure, able to rebreed, and have a live calf. "Those factors are most important; EPDs and science don't always identify these traits. We are with the cattle daily and can identify the superior cattle. We can see what works and what doesn't," he said.

Dykes says that when their customers turn their bulls out they hold up nicely because of the way they were raised. "We are commercial cattlemen, purebred breeders, and we feed cattle."

They feed out their own all-natural steers and heifers, and buy calves from their customers.

They feed cattle in Colorado and Kansas, and get all the data back.

"This influences our breeding decisions. We are among very few purebred programs in the U.S. that run this many cows and also feed cattle. We use all the selection tools available — but also put cattle into an environment where we can identify any with bad feet, poor structure, et cetera, and eliminate them from our program," Dykes said.

They've acquired some of the best bulls in the industry and try to find the best genetics that will work in this environment, and then multiply them via artificial insemination and embryo transfer (ET).

"Anyone can utilize the top AI bulls, so we differentiate ourselves with the cow," says Leachman. They

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