

Clint Johnson: Brings out the best in cattle dogs

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Growing up on a six-generation cattle ranch, Clint Johnson always had dogs around, but it wasn't until later that he became aware of what ranch dogs can do.

"My mother-in-law Jeanne Warnock had some real cow dogs, border collies that I got to see work and I was very impressed and intrigued and really wanted to get a lot more serious about it," Johnson said.

"For a long time, many ranchers were pretty anti-dog," he said. "They'd had hired hands or neighbors that had dogs that weren't very well trained and could be tough on livestock and weren't much help."

Over time, that attitude has changed, he said.

"Working dogs are becom-



Clint Johnson plans his next move at the family-run Warnock Ranches. Johnson will be offering cattle dog demonstrations Saturday and Sunday at the Central Oregon Ag Show.

ing more prevalent in the West as ranchers are seeing what they can do," Johnson said. "They're slowly changing their minds about having them and becoming more willing to shell out a lot of money for them."

By putting on working dog demonstrations at the Central Ore-

gon Agricultural Show, Johnson hopes to convince more people of their value.

"I'll set up a little field out there with some obstacles that I'll put the cattle through and explain how this is useful in an everyday ranching situation," he said. "You don't need as much labor which, in today's

SEE YOU AT THE SHOW

Clint Johnson will demonstrate cattle dogs at 11 a.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. Sunday at the Central Oregon Ag Show.

market, is extremely hard to find.

"They're just amazing animals; one well-trained dog can replace four guys on horseback — and the dog never shows up hungover or drunk," Johnson said. "They show up to work every day, eager to work and are happy to be yelled at."

Warnock Ranches is operated by Johnson and his wife, Cassi; her parents, Randy and Jeanne Warnock; and siblings Jerod Warnock and Abby Warnock.

Between their locations in Eastern and Central Oregon they run pairs and retain yearlings to place in

a feedlot to be sold through a natural beef co-op, Country Natural Beef, that the family helped found.

Dogs are an integral part of their daily operations, with about eight finished dogs helping run some 1,600 head of mother cows and 1,400 yearlings over large expanses of range, meadow and forest. Seven dogs are in various stages of training.

Johnson works exclusively with border collies.

"There are lots of breeds that will do a decent job, but if you Google 'smartest dog in the world' the border collie comes up," Johnson said. "Besides being extremely intelligent, they're extremely eager to please, whereas Jack Russells, for example, are very smart dogs but they're also eager to get away with doing things you don't want them to."

Midstate Power Products: Kubota tractors and more

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Monica and Frank Platt, co-owners of Midstate Power Products, are no strangers to taking the show on the road.

The Kubota dealership was one of the first to sign up to sponsor the first-ever Central Oregon Agricultural Show March 26-27.

For 10 years, they have sponsored and exhibited at fairs, trade shows and other ag-related events from about February through fair season in August, setting up booths and displays of the latest Kubota machines.

"During COVID, nothing was happening; it was very weird," Monica Platt said. "Everybody said to take advantage of the downtime because when the shows are on, we're moving around a lot and there's always something in the works while

we're also trying to keep the stores staffed."

The Platts purchased his brother Gilbert's 30-year Kubota dealership in 2011 and set about making it their own.

"We started out small, with three or four people in the whole operation, and just kept expanding from there," Platt said. "We started taking on larger tractor lines with larger equipment that couldn't fit in the shop doors and knew we had to move."

The Platts found a three-acre property on Highway 97 that included a large, vacant building — a former KidZone indoor play facility.

"It was dilapidated, and we were able to purchase the land," Platt said. "Then we found a contractor to basically recycle the majority of the cinder block building."

The new building was finished in 2014, complete with taller roll-up shop doors.

"It had such a dynamic effect on the business," Platt said. "Productivity went up and sales increased by 30% just from changing to a location with better visibility and access; it was absolutely amazing what a difference it made."

"We were able to bring in more product offerings, which also helped," she said.

The following year they opened Pelican Tractor Company in Klamath Falls, followed in 2018 by Malheur Machinery in Hines.

"Kubota has evolved over the years with their tractor horsepower offerings and are not just small hobby tractors anymore," Platt said. "They've gotten up into the higher horsepower-range tractors, which is what you need to work with some of those larger ag implements."

High Desert Stampede: Attracting rodeo's finest to Central Oregon

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Unlike most rodeos, the High Desert Stampede has been operating as a start-up since its inception in 2015.

"Typical rodeos, especially PRCA rodeos, have long traditions going back 75 or 100 years, so to be young is very unusual," High Desert Stampede Board Member Chad Morris said. "Our board of directors is composed of business owners, not necessarily rodeo athletes or those who came up in rodeo, and so we operate a little differently."

For one thing, the Stampede takes its lead from the National Finals Rodeo by keeping side shows and specialty acts to a minimum.

"We focus on the athletes and the animal athletes that we're bringing to town," Morris said. "We feature them and get them into the arena one after the other as quickly as we can so that we're entertaining and presenting the rodeo product more than trying to fill time."

Always at the end of March, this year's High Desert Stampede is March 23-26 at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center's First Interstate Bank Center in Redmond.

Though they've been able to draw world

champions with less money, the board is taking a bit of a gamble this year by adding \$10,000 in prize money to each event. Combined with entry fees, the anticipated total payout will exceed \$150,000.

"Last year we opened on Wednesday night with the Wrights out of Utah, who are in the national news regularly, and they went on to win a couple of national titles, so we have top-caliber athletes and top-caliber stock," Morris said. "Our livestock budget alone is more than \$90,000 so we're doing everything we can to bring fans the best of the best on both sides."

Central Oregon has a longstanding bareback tradition with local talent including Bobby Mote and Steven Peebles. Austin Foss is considered the latest in that lineage.

"We know Austin Foss is planning to attend the High Desert Stampede and expect to see other NFR qualifier names when entries open," Morris said. "Our goal is to continue delivering a fast-paced, entertaining, family-friendly rodeo, with the best athletes and livestock we can bring to Central Oregon each year."

The Central Oregon Agricultural Show at Deschutes County Fair & Expo March 26-27 will overlap with the Stampede on Saturday, so folks will be able to visit the Ag Show on their way to the rodeo.