

## BRANDING: There are currently 10,654 brands registered in Oregon

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ters U and R, which stands for Double M's original name, the Umatilla Ranch.

With spring calving underway since late January, Double M began its branding on Thursday, taking advantage of a warm and sunny morning. The cattle will eventually be sold to feedlots across the Northwest, where a healthy 900-pound steer can fetch \$2,000 or more.

Branding is not required in Oregon, though producers are encouraged to brand as a deterrent to theft. Cattle rustling remains a concern, Sexson said, especially as prices continue to hit record highs due to drought.

"It would be a major concern here if all of a sudden we started missing 2-3 calves every week," Sexson said.

A state inspector must be on hand for all cattle sales at auction or shipments out of state, whether the animals are



The Double M Ranch runs 1,600 cattle on 6,000 acres in the Echo and Stanfield area.

branded or not, to verify ownership. There are 10,654 total brands currently registered with the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Double M Ranch runs about 1,600 head of cattle, mostly Black Angus and Simmental, on 6,000 acres split between Stanfield and Echo. The rule of thumb is to brand

when calves are about two months old, before they become too large to handle.

As it is, it takes four people working together to brand a roughly 200-pound calf at Double M. Mike and Patsy Taylor, who live on the ranch and manage operations, check off each animal by its tag number, which keeps a record

of the individual's sex, color, birth date and weight.

It was Patsy Taylor's grandfather, Irvin Mann Sr., who bought the land in 1944 that was expanded and developed into Double M Ranch. The Taylors, along with their sons Jack and Sam, have carried on the family operation now through four generations.

Just before each calf is branded, Patsy Taylor injects them with vaccinations for a variety of infectious bacterial diseases, known as clostridial diseases. The shots are given under the skin at the base of the neck, which is held still by a locking bar at one end of the table.

"They're just like little kids getting vaccinated," Taylor said. "When they're six months old, they get another round of vaccinations and, when we wean them, they'll get another."

The table flips up with a clang, allowing Sexson to brand right over the top of the

calf, now on its side. Not only is the brand design unique, but its placement on the animal must be consistent.

Taylor compares the brand to someone accidentally grabbing a hot frying pan or touching a hot stove. The burn doesn't last long, but it's enough to sear away the hair follicles and leave a permanent mark.

"They forget, though," she said. "They'll move on to bigger and better things after a while."

Despite their bleats of protest, Taylor said all their calves are handled calmly with the least amount of stress possible.

"They work really hard for us, so we have to work really hard for them," she said. "Without them, we don't have a livelihood. You have to respect them."

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## Heifer drive raises scholarship money

The Umatilla County Cattlemen's Association is seeking heifers donated by local producers to sell at auction, with proceeds to go toward college scholarships for qualifying high school students.

The goal is to bring in 50 heifers and raise \$100,000 for the UCCA Scholarship Endowment Fund.

All expenses to feed, manage and sell the heifers will be donated by project supporters. Residents can also donate cash that will be used to support the purchase of heifers for sale.

For more information about the Scholarship Heifer Drive, contact UCCA President Clint Sexson at 541-609-0167; Randy Mills at 541-278-5404; or Patsy Taylor at 541-561-5288.

## SCOTT: Matthew Hermann got life in prison for Key's murder

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in court along with a few other supporters. He did not address the court.

Scott also did not make a statement. Davis said her client was nervous about speaking in public. Luukinen noted he and Scott spoke at length during plea negotiations in February, when Scott expressed his wish that the crimes had not happened and offered condolences to Key's family.

Scott, Jacob Lee White, 20, and Matthew Hermann, 22, in late January 2013 forced their way into Key's home in the small community of Umapine to rob her. She was 79 and lived a vibrant life on her own, according to her family. White told police Hermann was the ringleader.

The intruders bound Key to a chair with duct tape, and Hermann beat her unconscious. She died six months later at the age of 80.

Luukinen negotiated plea deals with each defendant. Hermann last month pleaded guilty to Key's murder and to first-degree assault. Luukinen sentenced Hermann to life in prison, but he will be eligible for parole after he serves 40 years.

White in June 2014 pleaded guilty to first-degree robbery and burglary. He was facing a sentencing Friday. Umatilla County Circuit Court records show the state pushed that back until April 21.

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## GUNS: About 40 percent of Oregon households have guns

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The measure would require private buyers and sellers who aren't related to visit a licensed gun dealer for a background check. That goes further than previous attempts to expand background checks, which required only that the seller call an Oregon State Police hotline to check the buyer's background.

"This bill allows me to give a gun to a first cousin who I may have not seen in 40 years without a background check. But I can't give it to my best friend," said Kevin Starrett, head of the Oregon Firearms Federation, a gun-rights group.

Oregon already goes further than federal law in requiring background checks at gun shows under an initiative approved by voters in 2000.

"Now, since 2000, the Internet has become an online marketplace for guns, where tens of thousands of guns are available to Lord knows who without a background check," said Dan Gross, president of the Brady Campaign.

Federal law requires background checks for sales by licensed gun dealers, but not at gun shows or private transactions. Checks are done through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, a database maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

According to the bureau's online report, the database did over 43,000 checks in Oregon for January and February. About 40 percent of

the state's households have guns.

The checks focus on convicted felons, people under indictment, the mentally ill, drug users, people under restraining orders, dishonorably discharged veterans and people in the country illegally. Not all states report mental health records to the system.

According to the gun control advocacy group Oregon Alliance for Gun Safety, the state's background check system denies about 1 percent of firearm sales.

Two years in a row, the Legislature failed to pass bills requiring background checks for private gun sales. But last year's election saw Democrats up their majority by two seats to 18-12 in the Senate, in part because of a push by a leading gun control group backed by billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

The gun control group Everytown for Gun Safety contributed \$75,000 last year to Democratic Sen. Chuck Riley of Hillsboro, who defeated the Republican incumbent who opposed expanded background checks. They also donated \$250,000 to former Gov. John Kitzhaber, who was a longtime supporter of expanded background checks.

According to state records, Everytown contributed nearly \$600,000 on the 2014 election, \$450,000 of which was in contributions to candidates and committees, and \$110,000 on other grassroots efforts.



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