

A day in the life of a ranching family

McCrackens work together to take care of the ranch

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Joe McCracken slowly rumbles in his hay truck across Crown Ranch's muddy pastures Friday as heifers and calves meander over for morning feeding with snow-capped mountains off in the distance.

It is March, and it is calving season. A critical time of year for ranchers across Grant County.

"This is a stressful time of year," McCracken says.

But, for the McCracken Livestock company, it is a family affair. And Friday morning, everyone pitches in to get the cows fed.

McCracken's wife, Didgette, the Open Campus coordinator at Oregon State University Extension office, is there to feed the cattle before her 9 a.m. conference call.

As is their son Sam, a junior at Grant Union, whose equestrian competition season for reined cow starts in Eugene later on in the day Friday.

Their daughter Bailey, a freshman, who has a volleyball game later that morning, is also helping out.

Sam, who took first place in state in boys cutting earlier this year — an equestrian competition where a horse and a rider demonstrate before a panel of judges both the horse and rider's ability to handle cattle — says he has been helping out the ranch for as far back as he can remember.

His father agrees. "I had them both (Sam and Bailey) sitting on my lap in the pickup when they were kids," he says.

Sam says he learned to drive the John Deere hay tractor when he was 8 years old — though it was not always easy to maneuver.

"I've broken a lot of bales," he says with a grin.

But, someday, he says he wants to carry on the family tradition of ranching.

"I've never known anything different."



Sam and Bailey McCracken move cows.



The Eagle/Steven Mitchell
Sam McCracken



Sam McCracken feeds cows.



Sam McCracken moves hay with a tractor.

eomedia group
The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.
eomediagroup.com

THANK YOU FARMERS and RANCHERS

OTEC is proud to celebrate the people who have dedicated their lives to feeding the world.

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative
Putting Our Energy To Work For You

Duke Warner Realty
Dayville, Oregon
Licensed in the State of Oregon

Where people and places have been coming together for over 50 years
Lori Hickerson, Principal Broker, GRI • Office: 541-575-2617 • ljh@ortelco.net
Sally Knowles, Broker, GRI • Office: 541-932-4493 • sknowles@ortelco.net
Babette Larson, Broker, GRI • Office: 541-987-2363 • ddwr@ortelco.net
dukewarnerrealtyofeasternoregon.com

PROUD SPONSOR OF NATIONAL AG DAY!

Russell's Custom Meats & Deli
235 N Canyon City Blvd. | John Day
541-575-0720 | Open Mon-Fri 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

PROUDLY SUPPORTING EASTERN OREGON AGRICULTURE.

AGCO PARTS
HESSTON
MASSEY FERGUSON

Robbins Farm Equipment
3850 10th St., Baker City 86812 Christmas Valley Hwy., Christmas Valley
541-523-6377 541-523-6377
1160 S Egan, Burns 62302 Pierce Rd., La Grande
541-573-6377 541-963-6577

IRON TRIANGLE, LLC

Patterson Bridge Rd.
John Day, OR
541-575-2102

PROUDLY PROVIDING employment opportunities for the people of Grant County since 1983.