

# LINE RIDER

NOVEMBER 2022

A PUBLICATION BY THE



Patriot  
Cattle :  
Improving  
Herds  
Through

## Superior Genetics

PLUS

Independent Idaho : A Series  
on the Beef Chain, Part 2



U of I: Selection Priorities and Tools  
for Evaluation and Improvement

Photos provided by Idaho County Free Press

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Boise, ID  
Permit No. 9

IDAHO CATTLE ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 15397  
2120 Airport Way  
Boise ID 83715

COVER STORY

Originally printed in the Idaho County Free Press  
By David Rauzi, Editor JCFP

LEE MUENCH EXPLAINS: "THE FIRST-CALF HEIFERS GET A LITTLE MORE ATTENTION TO ENSURE THEY BREED BACK ON TIME WITH THE REST OF THE OLDER COWS."

# Patriot Cattle : Improving herds through

# Superior Genetics



*Better cattle make for a better bottom line. The mission is pretty straightforward.*

*"We focus on primarily producing registered Angus bulls for breeding," said Lee Muench, "for other ranchers to use in their breeding program to improve their herds, and increase their profits by having superior Angus genetics."*

All photos by Idaho County Free Press



"CALVING IN THE LATE SUMMER/FALL HAS ITS ADVANTAGES SUCH AS NOT HAVING TO BATTLE THE HARSH WINTER WEATHER AND REDUCED CASES OF CALF SCOURS WHICH, IF NOT TREATED PROMPTLY, CAN SPREAD RAPIDLY AMONG CALVES AND BE FATAL."

Lee and his wife, Marilee, own and operate Patriot Cattle Company on more than 400 acres just south of Grangeville. This family-owned business started in fall 2018 and has grown steadily since in serving the region's cattle producers, with plans to expand into the Inland Northwest and beyond.

Lee and Marilee complement each other in abilities to operate a 24-7, 365-day business that also incorporates raising their three children: Weston, 7, Roy, 3, and Dorothy, 1. A local man, and raised in Grangeville, Lee comes from a cattle ranching family, while Marilee was raised in the suburbs near San Francisco — a country boy and a city girl who hit it off and made it work.

"Mom and Dad had a predominantly commercial herd of Hereford-Angus cross cattle and a smaller number of registered Angus, as well," Lee said. "Growing up, I was always intrigued by the purebred aspect; choosing sires from all over the country and using their genetics to improve our herd."

"We met in college, as we were going through the ROTC program," Marilee smiled. "Once Lee completed his obligation to the Army, I realized that I'm OK anywhere as long as I have family. I prefer small

communities like Grangeville which encourage good family values, and where we can pursue our faith freely. So, when he said, 'I want to ranch,' I said, 'Ok, I can do that,' and that was that. I was game, and I'm learning constantly."

"We balance each other out pretty well," Marilee continued. "God has given him certain strengths and given me certain strengths, with which we complement each other well."

Lee does most of the herd side of the operation: choosing sires to use in the breeding program, making determinations on animals that make the grade to keep and develop to sell to ranchers. Marilee does the majority of the bookkeeping, and works on the growing marketing plans that include advertising, social media and website development. Their website, [www.patriotcattlecompany.com](http://www.patriotcattlecompany.com), recently launched and they can be found as Patriot Cattle Company on both Facebook & Instagram.

Cattle production is busy work, around the clock, whether you're raising animals for the commercial meat market or for seed stock — "We all work really hard, we're just in different sections of the industry," Marilee said. One difference with their operation is the more technical aspect of breeding, and the narrow window to conduct this activity.

LEE AND MARILEE MUENCH

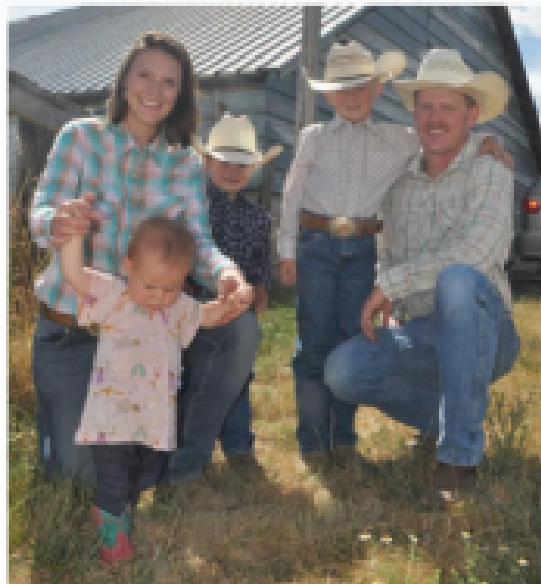


“We synchronize the estrus cycles of all the cows and inseminate them at a certain time,” Lee said. “We have to put the cows through the working chute two to three times to get them synchronized, so when we breed them we expect at least a 75% settling rate the first heat. Afterwards, we turn in our clean-up bulls to cover any cows which may cycle in subsequent heats.” Commercial producers on average have a 45- to 90-day window to get all their cows bred, “and the way we have chosen, we have to work them at very specific times,” Marilee continued. “We have a three- to four-hour window to get them bred using artificial insemination.”

One aspect of this operation Lee prefers is calving, due to the calves being born in late summer/early fall.

“It’s a lot easier at this time of year, than when you’re calving in a blizzard and trying to keep calves alive,” he said...though cows still need monitoring — notably first-calf heifers — which means Lee doesn’t get out of his share of late nights to save a newborn.

For Patriot Cattle, the operation in large part is keeping meticulous records on every cow, in evaluating their strengths, areas of improvement, and matching up these through the semen catalogues. Where a heifer needs im-



MARILEE AND LEE MUENCH WITH THEIR CHILDREN (L-R) DOROTHY, ROY AND WESTON.

provement in an area, she will be matched up with a bull that is strong in that trait, “and hopefully improve the genetics for the next calving season.”

Better genetics doesn’t mean the same thing for each rancher.

“Commercial ranchers have different needs based on the environment and the country they are on,” Lee said. For example, the Salmon River country with its steep, rocky drainages is harder and more sparse than that of the open, flat pasture of the Camas Prairie, “so those animals have to get by and gain pounds by not getting as good forage.” It’s simple mathematics: pounds equal

dollars for the commercial ranchers, and Salmon River producers need to start with an 80-pound calf and sell it at 600 pounds in hard country where it’s more difficult to thrive.

“Our goal is to breed bulls for both types of ranchers that will be able to breed cows while at the same time maintaining condition and not completely falling apart,” Lee said. “Because, in turn, their calves will thrive the following year. It’s a never-ending cycle of improving genetics of certain animals that can convert lower quality forages into pounds.”

BETTER GENETICS DOESN'T MEAN THE SAME THING FOR EACH RANCHER, BUT PATRIOT AIMS TO BREED BULLS FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF BOTH COMMERCIAL & COW-CALF PRODUCERS.





"WE WORK THE NEWBORN CALVES WITHIN SIX HOURS OF BIRTH. THIS INCLUDES TAKING A BIRTH WEIGHT, ADMINISTERING VITAMIN AND MINERAL INJECTIONS, TATTOOING THE CALVES WITH THEIR PERMANENT HERD NUMBER (AS PER THE AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION), AND EAR TAGS."

In developing their bulls, Lee said they don't confine them to a feedlot and force-feed extra "hot" rations in order to bulk them up so the end weight gain numbers look impressive, but rather they are developed in real conditions.

"By grazing on grass and developing slowly, their bodies learn to perform in real conditions because they were raised in real conditions," Marilee said, with Lee adding, "Our bull calves still gain weight really well, and when they go to breed cows in the real world they won't fall apart.... I think it's more important that when someone buys a bull from me, what they see is what they get."

Marilee is still on her learning journey in being a rancher's wife, one that is helped not only by Lee, but as well from her children who work by their sides.


"I had some hesitation. I wasn't sure what I would be saying yes to," she said, when Lee asked her to come on this ranching venture with him as his wife. Lee told her what a blessing it is for children to grow up in this type of lifestyle, and "now, as a mother,

and having grown up in another environment and seeing the contrast from that with what our children do on a daily basis, it really is special."

The couple praise the area and their occupation as allowing them to see miracles every day, to be stewards of these animals as God intended, to contribute to society in a meaningful way, and to convey those things worth knowing to their children.

"It's the best place to raise a family; a complete family involvement," Lee said. "The boys work with me all the time, they

grow up in an area where they get to learn — now in this day and age — old-school values, values that founded this country," including biblical principles, honesty and integrity. "People take values such as these for granted nowadays, but we value them. We get to raise kids in this area; family is very important to us, and this is a great way to combine them."

"It's raw, real life what we feel we have here," Marilee said, "and it's really special." 

"WE KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON OUR NEWBORN CALVES IN ORDER TO REMEDY ANY ILLNESSES THEY MAY CONTRACT."

