**Producer Spotlight: Beth Patterson, Pringle Ranch & Patterson Farms, Yates Center Kansas**

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By Audrey Hambright

As a fourth-generation rancher near Yates Center, Kansas, Beth Patterson of Pringle Ranch and Patterson Farms has a deep family history rooted in Kansas agriculture.

The ranch dates back to the 1890’s when Patterson’s great grandfather, John Pringle, moved to Woodson County, Kansas, from Arizona for “better schools and social privileges” for his eight children. His son, Jim, entered the cattle business in 1930. Patterson’s father, J. Richard, expanded with a feedlot/background operation in 1973 a business that’s used to start 500 to 800 calves during the winter months.

Not only does she share a love of agriculture and the cattle industry with her family, but also for Kansas State University. Patterson along with her father, daughter and one brother hold animal science degrees from K-State. Another brother is also a graduate of the K-State family.

After receiving her degree in 1979, Patterson spent two years working “off the farm” with Monsanto Farmers Hybrid Magnum Bull Program.

“It was a super job to have after college,” she said. “It was a good learning experience, and I was able to travel.”

Soon after in 1981, Patterson returned to the ranch to help run it. Today, she manages the ranch along with her husband, David, and her daughter, Becky. Pringle Ranch and Patterson Farms now have 4,500 acres of grassland with another 500 acres of native bluestem hay and 700 acres of cropland that consists of wheat, corn and soybeans.

When it comes to management practices, no matter the season, Patterson is adamant that herd health comes first.

“In the summer, we’re checking pastures, putting out mineral and, in the winter, we’re feeding and doing fencing projects if the weather allows,” she said. “But it all comes back to checking herd health.”

To keep up on industry information including animal health, nutrition and marketing, Patterson makes use of the numerous resources available to producers including publications and websites. Currently, she is working her way through the online Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training program.

“It brings you up-to-date, broadens your mind,” she said. “We [producers] need to keep educating ourselves.”

Staying abreast of industry information also allows Patterson to continually work towards her goals and objectives as a rancher.

Another aspect that helps Patterson stay in the know is attending meetings and being a part of industry organizations. Locally, she is a member of the Kansas Farm Bureau, Woodson County Farm Bureau, Woodson County Cattlewomen as well as the Kansas Livestock Association and currently serves on the Kansas Beef Council Executive Committee. On the national level, she is a member of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association and serves as a member of the Global Growth Committee through the Cattlemen’s Beef Board.

While Patterson is aware of the challenges that face the industry, she sees a lot of opportunity ahead.

“We’re getting so much better about telling our story about what we do and how we do it,” she said. “We’re sharing our lives with the consumer so they feel better about buying our product.”

Another opportunity, she added, has to do with herd health.

“Herd health management has greatly improved leading to higher quality cattle and the end result is a better beef product,” she said.

For those just starting out with their own operation or even returning to the family operation, she has a few pieces of advice.

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions and always seek advice from your peers, older or younger,” she said. “It’s important to attend educational meetings and to get involved with livestock organizations. It will keep you informed and affect the livelihood of your operation.”

She knows, because she’s been there and continues to grow a successful business alongside her family. While a career in agriculture may not be the easiest occupation she could have chosen, often being at the mercy of Mother Nature, it’s definitely one with many rewards.

“Agriculture is my heritage,” she said proudly. “I enjoy the responsibility to be the caretaker of cattle, grass and crops and being blessed to be able to make a living doing what I have a passion for. Agriculture has and always will be a changing industry. Its people are a huge asset to work with.”