



Modern Day Practices for Long Time Cattlemen

The commercial sector of the cattle industry is the grease that turns the wheels in the cattle business today. Without the commercial producer creating the daily buying and selling of cash cattle there would be a lower demand for the quality genetics of the seed stock sector. Therefore, it is crucial to keep up with market trends and the needs of commercial operations. It is a two-way street as the commercial sector's responsibility to keep basic records and track their herd progress in order to know where they stand when it comes to performance. The Winston 8 Ranch, in Lufkin, Texas, is a strong advocate of data collection and result submission to Brangus and Braunvieh associations, and any other associations that register the type of cattle that they are using in their crossbreeding program. In later years, Winston 8 has moved more towards Brangus genetics and for that we are super excited. Simon Winston, and Ranch Manager Paul Wood, work extremely hard to maintain the most accurate information on their replacement herd. Sire selection is also a huge part of their operation. They cull very strictly when attending sales across the country in search of the bull that best fits their herd goals. This means creating cattle that are easy fleshing, high marbling, low birthweight, and produce a high yielding heavy carcass on the rail. Working closely with the International Brangus Breeders Association (IBBA) over the past few years, they are able to better achieve this goal by collection and submission of their performance information and utilizing the natural heterosis of Brangus cattle.

Winston has been in the cattle business for over 50 years, with a history that extends back to his grandfather, to total about 115 years

of the Winston family's involvement in the business. The family's auction number at the local sale barn used to always be eight, and this became

the official brand of the outfit. The Winston 8 Ranch started by raising 20-25 head of assorted-breed cattle, and has turned into a 250-head of



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commercial beef cow ranch, sending feeder calves into the yard with retained ownership through the packer. This means that the kill data they receive enables them to make adjustments and develop the cattle in order to better accommodate consumer needs. In recent years, Winston and Wood have started using Ultrablack bulls, and are really pleased with the results they are getting. They market the cattle on a hormone-free beef agenda, and say that Brangus cattle with their natural disease resistance help to decrease the number of treated calves throughout the year. The ranch's hot, wet climate makes it tough to fight typical issues when utilizing other breeds of cattle. Having the proper amount of heat-tolerant traits in their herd helps them to produce cattle with the necessary hardiness and survivability. This saves time and money to utilize in other areas of the operation.

Winston 8 Ranch prides itself on being an ultra-low stress operation with the most attractive pasture management around. Winston and Wood are very involved with the cattle, and interact with them on a daily basis, which makes for very docile cattle. As Wood likes to say, "50 years raising cattle and we still sit on the tailgate and hand-cube-feed our cattle in the evenings."

Additionally, consistent and accurate records are kept daily in order for their cattle to continue to possess traits that respond well to their methods and perform even better. Wood said, "We raise cattle because we love it and it's rewarding, and like Simon says, if it was just work we wouldn't do it."

Winston and Wood are very hands-on in their cattle operation. Calving season is priority when the time comes. All other major activities are set aside to focus on the well-being of the dams and their

calves being born. There is always someone around to witness the calving process. This helps ensure that calving scores for their herd are recorded based on a calf being born, *(continued on page 16)*

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and for the full process of that specific cow. This information is not taken lightly. Proper record-keeping, up-to-date practices, and knowledge of the changes in genetics is imperative. Especially since Winston 8 strives to provide its marketplace with the most wholesome and highest-quality natural beef.

Winston 8 Ranch's breeding success equates to over 98 percent pregnancy rate on a 100 day breeding season. Calving rates are directly attributed to matching the highest-quality performance bulls with their highest-quality dams and retained heifers. According to Winston and Wood, the Brangus breed has helped them reach the marks they continue to maintain. "This is only achieved through data collection, proper, honest and accurate record-keeping, the best genetics available, and knowing performance of your herd," Wood says, "And

having all of the information at your fingertips with today's technology." Being able to access the information you collect while in the pasture sure helps for quick decision-making. Winston explained: "You get out what you put into it when it comes to record keeping."

The personnel at Winston 8 Ranch keeps close tabs on all aspects of their operation, especially on the fed-cattle side. They retain ownership up until the buyer sees the quality

grading on the carcasses that are processed. This is a high-risk practice in the eyes of many but for Winston 8 it is merely seen as a higher reward because they are confident in how their cattle perform. Due to many years of consistent results, Winston and Wood feel that the guess work is taken out of their cattle, because they know how good they are going to be before the buyer sees the quality grade. Their database dates back several years to some of their earliest feeding results. Their cattle have been maintaining over 85 percent

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Winston 8 Ranch has had huge success with its breeding and calving rates because of the pressure put on high quality bulls.



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choice or higher, hot carcass weight averages of about 875 pounds, and an average yield of 67 percent for six-years-running now. Buyers are willing to pay more for proven

cattle. These tremendous records show that having the right type of cattle will give your operation the opportunity to maximize profitability.

Winston 8 Ranch's philosophy is that education is the greatest tool when it

comes to proper management of your herd. As Winston 8 works closely with IBBA, and other associations, they are able to stay on top of the game using the most current practices, products, genetics, and market trends to help raise the highest-quality cattle possible. The performance results they are achieving with the influence of Brangus cattle into their crossbreeding program are amazing. This is certainly a relationship that the IBBA is proud to have made. This is the kind of great feedback that the association likes to hear from breeders. Brangus cattle work in any situation and with proper care and management they thrive, and ultimately help to solve the everyday consumer standards of today's cattle industry.

The IBBA would like to extend a special thanks to Winston 8 Ranch for participating in this edition of the Frontline Beef Producer and encourages all commercial producers to get involved at the association level to take part in IBBA programs and capitalize on marketing opportunities with Brangus genetics.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

A native of Killeen, Texas, Kyle Dykes grew up on a small farm raising commercial crossbred cattle. Agriculture has always been a passion of his, and he has been actively trying to help make a difference and be a part of the growth of agriculture in Texas. Previously, Dykes worked as the Natural Resources County Extension Agent for McLennan County. This allowed him the opportunity to work with some of the finest 4-H youth in Texas as well as producers in the Central Texas region. His educational background helped him build a strong network within the industry that he is now able to apply to his current position as the IBBA Commercial Marketing Coordinator. Dykes received his bachelor's degree in animal science from Texas A&M University in 2013, and has also been a licensed auctioneer in Texas since 2011. Dykes believes it is truly an honor to have the opportunity to promote Brangus and play a role in the cattle business on a national level. Contact Dykes to see how you can get involved too!

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