

Protect Profits And the Environment -2

Award-Winning Cattle Operations Safeguard Land, Water While Making Money

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By Kurt Lawton
Contributing Editor

Young's Cattle Company, Belmont, Ohio

A cattle background and a lot of creativity enabled West Virginians Rick and Jayne Young to look at an old strip mine and see a lush pasture for a cow/calf business. They bought a farm in 1995 near Belmont, Ohio, and leased more than 3,000 acres of reclaimed strip mine land. Today they have a successful business of 400 cow/calf pairs, plus they background up to 5,000 head annually.

"It's been a lot of hard work, and it took about three years to reclaim the land thanks to use of EPA-approved biosolid nutrients that really brought the grass [and weeds] back," Rick says. "Then came the fencing, lots of spraying and brush clearing, and discovering water springs to develop our watering system."

The Youngs, with Jayne handling the main herding duties and Rick working days for a local electrical company, managed to implement many practices that protect and improved this ranch.

The list includes:

Installed 628,000 feet of wire fence (with financial help from the EQIP program) that divides the property into 57 paddocks that are rotated weekly.

Worked with the NRCS to install 16 heavy-use feeding pads to stop erosion in bad weather.

Developed 14 springs using recycled tires as water tanks, with 15,000 feet of water lines to reach all paddocks.

Fenced off 16 ponds, streams and wooded areas while installing four stream crossings to cut erosion.

Provided habitat for geese, ducks, deer and wild turkeys through such practices as delayed clipping and rotational grazing.

"To help reduce our feed costs considerably, we work with a bakery to get their bread waste, which goes right into the grinder-mixer grain ration [corn silage mix in winter] calculated by our nutritionist. The 15% protein in the bread delivers a great ration which we feed daily to the yearling cattle, and the cows and calves get it once a week; it's like dessert to them," Rick chuckles.

These everyday environmentalists also take pride in educating the local community through tours of their farm and hosting grazing meetings and beef groups. "Every fall there's a 'rubberneck tour' for anyone in the county. We take them on wagons around the farm and talk about every aspect of the operation, how we care for the animals and the land, and about agriculture in general. Ohio State also brings their beef production class out every spring. And we continue to host grazing tours as well as beef groups from other states," he adds.

For more information

Web site of NCBA Environmental Stewardship Program:

www.environmentalstewardship.org

Dow AgroSciences Range & Pasture newsletters, with ESP winners:

www.dowagro.com/range/resource/rpsteward.htm



Mark Quinn, of Stoney Point AgriCorp, raises dairy heifers along with beef cattle. He has installed structures to reduce feedlot runoff. His operation was featured in part 1 of this series. (DTN/Progressive Farmer image by Baxter Communications)

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