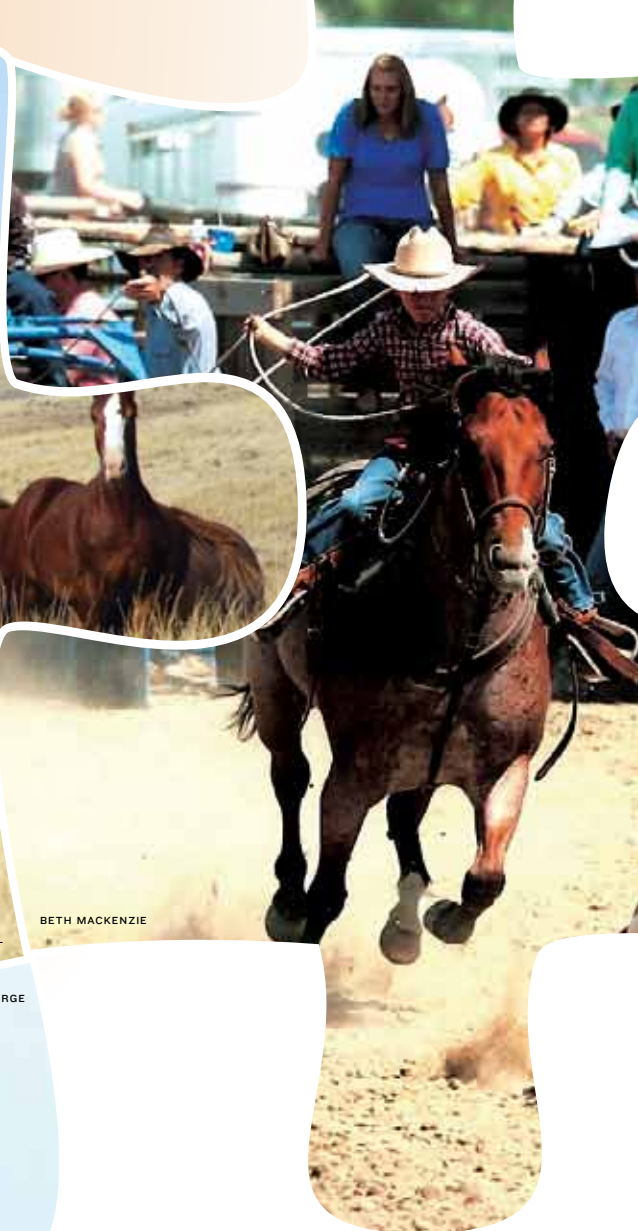


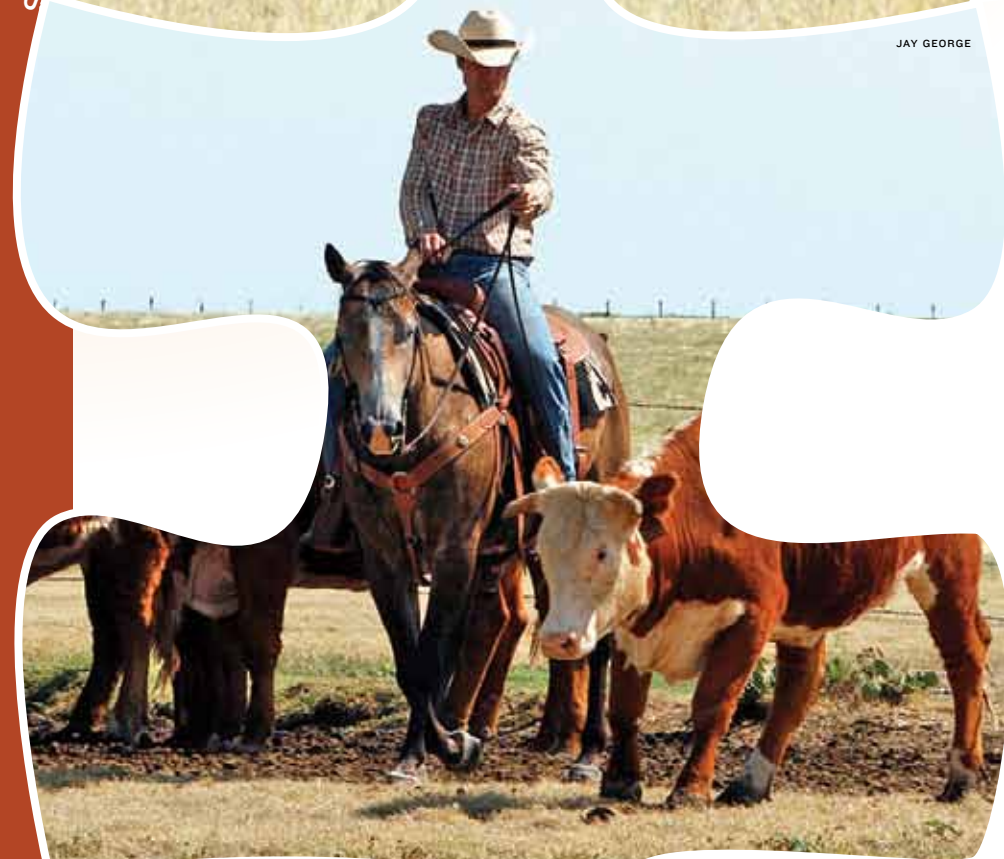


BECKY HARRELL



BETH MACKENZIE

JAY GEORGE



**Top Left:** Harrell-Mackenzie horses spend most of the year turned out together in big pastures.

**Above:** Duncan Mackenzie, 8 at the time, competes at his first breakaway roping aboard a home-raised horse.

**Left:** Judah Bauman sorts some heifers on a Jamison-bred horse, because on the Jamison Ranch, horses are a tool to handle cattle.



# Perfect Fit

*Raising horses and cattle can be a rewarding and advantageous business venture.*

**By Sara Gugelmeyer**

TO MANY RANCHERS, GOOD HORSES ARE AS ESSENTIAL AS GOOD fences, good grass and good water. The Harrell, Mackenzie and Jamison families are among those who appreciate good ranch horses and their place in the cattle industry, even in today's technologically advanced world. For these business-oriented cattle operations, horses aren't just pretty to look at in the pasture, they are a profitable part of the business, a tool as useful as a good pair of fencing pliers, and a fun toy to take to town on the weekend.

Gordon Jamison of Jamison Herefords and Quarter Horses in western Kansas says, "We look at a horse as a tool to handle cattle and we handle all of our cattle horseback, so our horse breeding program is geared entirely around the cow operation. They fit hand-in-glove, and having the cows gives us tremendous opportunity to train horses. Our ranch is about 20,000 acres, which gives us a lot of room to get a horse outside and be a horse on the job."

Bob Harrell Jr. and brother-in-law Wannie Mackenzie of eastern Oregon have combined forces to form Harrell-Mackenzie Quarter Horses, and the horses have added a lot to the Harrell Hereford Ranch annual cattle sale.

"When people come to the sale, they can buy a bull and a horse and some replacement heifers," Wannie explains. "I think it works very well as far as marketing the horse."

Bob says he and his family enjoy the horses.

"They are a big part of our operation because we use them. It's been a good fit for our operation."

## **Marketing the Cowboy Hat**

ENTERING THE HORSE BUSINESS IS NOT WITHOUT ITS CHALLENGES.

"We are ranchers with a rancher mentality, and we really thought we would like to raise horses for ranchers," Gordon says. "So all of our marketing efforts were geared toward bull customers and that type of people, true ranch people."

Gordon explains that it didn't take long before the family realized a lot of ranchers didn't have much extra money to spend on horses. So the Jamisons adjusted their program to also market horses to city folks: doctors, lawyers, ropers and people who just like to ride and are not necessarily working horseback.

"We are trying to give our horses a ranch horse base so they fit the ranch world, but in a way we are marketing the cowboy hat as well as the horse, because people like the cowboy idea and want a cowboy horse even if they're not a cowboy."

Changing the target customer required some changes in the program as well, Gordon says.

"The cowboys that ride for us here on the ranch will put up with an occasional buck on a cold morning and a little bit of a sour disposition if the horse is really good at his job, but our customers won't accept that. So gentle is moving up to the



most important consideration.”

The Harrell-Mackenzie target customer isn't all that different. “We're not pursuing the fastest horse in the world, and we're not producing the elite horses that are going to go to the (National Finals Rodeo),” Wannie says. “We are just trying to produce a horse that the public can ride.”

### The Customer's Always Right

Gordon offers an airtight money-back guarantee. If a buyer gets a horse home and has trouble with it or just isn't happy, he is welcome to bring it back for a refund.

“It doesn't pay to sell them something they don't want,” Gordon says.

He admits he has taken a few back, and some were perfectly good horses; the buyer just got a severe case of buyer's remorse. But Gordon says he knows that people will be more comfortable coming and raising their hand at the sale if they know the horses are guaranteed.

The Jamisons also offer other services to help the buyer. For example, at the time of the sale in early September, the colts aren't weaned. So, if the buyer chooses, he can leave the colt at the ranch to be weaned and halter broke. Through the years, about 20 to 50 percent of the colt buyers have taken advantage of that option.

Also, new at the 2010 sale, the Jamisons offered a trainer referral service with the purchase of their colts.

“They can bring the colt or young horse back, and we'll either ride them here on the ranch ourselves or we'll send them to a trainer that we respect,” Gordon says. “(The buyer) must pay for the training, but we coordinate that for the

buyer, because a lot of people don't know anybody who would ride a colt or have a clue how they could develop that. I think that's helped our colt market, too, just the fact that they know they can come back to us and say, ‘Will you start my colt or send

JAY GEORGE

Gordon Jamison and stallion PC Frost Em Peppy



## JAMISON QUARTER HORSES

In 1890, Owen Thomas Jamison homesteaded near Quinter, in northwestern Kansas. Now more than a century later, the same land is home to Jamison Herefords and Quarter Horses. Gordon partnered with his brother, Rusty, for many years, but Rusty recently liquidated his interest in the operation. Now Gordon and son Daron run about 600 registered Hereford cows. They also custom graze about 200 head more in the summer. They host a bull sale in the spring and usually a heifer-cow sale in the fall in conjunction with the horse sale.

The horse program was started about 20 years ago, and the Jamisons have been selling some horses in their sales since 1995.

The Jamisons' goal is to produce gentle, functional horses with speed and cow sense. Jamison horses are bred to perform on the ranch and in the arena. The family uses nine stallions, including full brothers PC Frost Em Peppy and PC Citisun Cline by Sun Frost; TR Special Drift by Wily Rox; PC Katwood Oaks by Docs Oaks Sugar; Wily Vaquero by Wilywood; Blues Orphan Drift and Roan Bar Valentine by Leo Hancock Hayes; Ali Frost by Ali Jack; and Three Jay Colonel by Colonel Hotrod. Jamison mares have a large influence of Sun Frost, Driftwood and Hancock breeding.

Offspring are sold as weanlings, started prospects or broke ranch horses. Head trainer Judah Bauman is in charge of training horses on the Jamison Ranch.

Horses are an essential part of ranch work on the Mackenzies' ranch, even when the weather is uncooperative.



BETH MACKENZIE

me to somebody you trust?’ ”

Customer satisfaction at Harrell-Mackenzie Quarter Horses starts with strict culling guidelines.

“Every mare we breed, we've ridden for two to three years and made sure she's got a great mind, lots of bone, lots of do-ability,” Wannie says. “We buckaroo on them; we pound rocks. And if they stand up to that, then we start raising colts. We really make sure that mare's mind is right, that she can take the pressure, and if it doesn't work out, we don't keep her. If we get a colt out of her and her colt's mind isn't right, we don't put the colt in our sale. We get rid of the colt and the mare. Ours is a tough sale to make.”

Bob stresses that the operation's horses are managed with the same criteria as its cow herd.

“They're mostly similar in how you breed livestock: The mare or the cow is a very important part of it,” Bob says. “You really make a colt based on a mare line, same (as) with cattle. We always try to breed for great cows or mares, and that leaves us great geldings or great bulls.”

### Making an Event

Both operations sell their horses in a live auction in conjunction with a cattle sale. Harrell-Mackenzie sells about 20-24 started 2-year-olds and a few others, including broodmares, weanlings and older horses, the first Monday in March each spring. Harrell Hereford Ranch offers bulls and heifers before the horses sell.

“There are a lot of bull sales out there, and adding the horse

# HARRELL-MACKENZIE QUARTER HORSES

The Harrell family operates a thriving Hereford seedstock business as well as a top-quality commercial cow herd in eastern Oregon near Baker City. Edna Harrell is the matriarch with her son Bob Harrell Jr. managing the ranch, along with his wife, Becky. Bob just wrapped up a term as president of the American Hereford Association, and the family was honored with the 2009 Beef Improvement Federation's seedstock producer of the year award.

A few miles away, Bob's sister Beth and husband Wannie Mackenzie run a large commercial cattle operation with a Hereford-Angus-cross cow herd. Although the Harrells and Mackenzies combine their resources in terms of marketing, each family makes its own breeding and management decisions.

Both the Harrells and Mackenzies bought the best fillies they could afford out of successful, reputable programs to start their horse herds.

They now own, either individually or in partnership, four American Quarter Horse stallions: Billy Red Baron by Mr Baron Red; RR Frenchmans Bully by Frenchmans Guy; Payin Doc by Paid By Chic; and Star Like Freckles by Grays Starlight.

The ranchers strive to produce the best 2-year-old prospects possible. Mares and colts run in large, rough pastures so the horses learn to handle their feet. Colts are halter broke when weaned, then ridden a few times as long yearlings. Early in their 2-year-old year, they get a few months of riding so they are ready to go by sale time in March.

All Harrell horses are freeze-branded with an HR and Mackenzie horses are freeze-branded with an O over a V.



Harrell-Mackenzie Quarter Horses is truly a family operation. Standing (L to R) are Beth and Wannie Mackenzie, Edna Harrell, Becky and Bob Harrell. Kneeling (L to R) are Maggie Mackenzie, Lexie Harrell, Duncan Mackenzie.

BETH MACKENZIE

deal to it has helped it go from a bull sale to more of an event," Bob says.

The night before the sale, on Sunday, the horses are previewed at a nearby ranch's indoor arena. On Monday, the bulls and heifers sell first, then, Bob says, the crowd sticks around for the horses. The nearby Thomas Angus Ranch sale is the next day, which many Harrell-Mackenzie customers also attend, so in between the sales, the two ranches host a cowboy gathering for customers.

The Jamisons have developed a similar approach. They traditionally sell their horses at a fall sale in conjunction with Hereford females. The Jamisons sell about 200 head, including about 50 weanlings, 50 broodmares and the rest riding horses. The day before, horses are previewed, and that evening, attendees are fed a hearty meal and treated to the sounds of a local band.

In 2010, the event gathered about 500 people for the pre-

view and evening entertainment and between 700 and 800 for the sale.

"We've been working hard to make this a fun event that people want to come to, just to bring the family and have fun," Gordon says. "We want people to want to come to our sale next year because they had such a good time, and hopefully in doing that, we can capture a few dollars along the way."

Through this sale, the Jamisons have developed a great marketplace for weanlings; last year, they averaged \$1,700 on the colts and \$1,200 on the fillies. Gordon attributes that to having good riding horses in the sale.

"I think the secret definitely is having solid riding horses in the sale that people can see what a baby will develop into," Gordon says. "Because if we have a pretty buckskin gelding that brings \$7,500 and they think that's out of their price range, they'll buy a pretty buckskin baby for \$1,500 to \$1,700 and feel good about that, hoping they can raise their own nice gelding."

It sounds simple enough, and Bob encourages cattlemen to consider the horse business if it's something they enjoy, but he cautions, "There always appears to be a good market for good horses, but there's really no market for just horses. So if you're going to get started, start with quality mares from a reputable program. Use the best studs you can afford. Research the bloodlines to be sure you are using the type of horses that fit your customers and then do a good job of marketing through advertising, website and photos. It takes a while, but you'll get a reputation built up by word of mouth. Then, don't hold anything back, and stand by it." □



Raising kids and horses is a rewarding combination. Here, Lexie Harrell ropes two feet at a spring branding.

BETH MACKENZIE

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