

WAGGONER CATTLE COMPANY

by LeAnne Peters



After sitting down to visit with Joe Waggoner about cattle, Hereford cattle in particular, it's easy to get a sense of just how much he enjoys the cattle business and also the history of the Hereford breed.

Waggoner Cattle Company is located in Leake County outside Carthage on his family's 150-year-old farm. Over the years, Joe has purchased some acreage of the original farm and added it to the 135 acres that his father inherited from his grandmother, and this is where Waggoner Cattle Company sits today. At one time, the farm was much larger than what it is today; however, like many generational farms, inheritances and taxes reduced the number of acres.

Growing up in Newton, Waggoner was involved in 4-H, FFA, and judging teams. His love of cattle came from his family, in particular his father. In fact, his father loved Herefords and his first Hereford came from his family.

"The farm was a place I could exercise responsibility," said Joe. "I learned lessons in public speaking, cattle care, and responsibility since the

age of 5 from working with a bottle calf that my father purchased and housed in the backyard. The lessons from the farm ended up helping me excel in my education through both

he and his wife were dating, Joe did not talk much about cattle and it came as a bit of surprise to his new bride that they were going to own cattle. But Joe says she has enjoyed the cattle

business even though some vacations have turned into farm visits at other cattle operations.

Joe is quick to point out that the purchases he made from breeders such as Pat Wilson and Rock Hollow Farm in Florida, as well as Fred Stokes in Mississippi, are the base of his genetics. Over the years he added other genetic influences from Cooper Herefords in Montana and Jamison Herefords in Kansas.

After several years of raising Herefords, Joe decided to purchase Angus cattle in 1990, and he continued to increase and con-

tinue build the purebred herd of both breeds through the 90's. But in 2004, after becoming busier with his business on the coast due to Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts and also family obligations, he made the decision to disperse his cattle. Fellow Mississippi



Joe Waggoner stands alongside a 4-H project with his father, Sam. Joe's love of Hereford cattle came from his father's involvement in the breed.

engineering and law school and they had a profound effect on me and my life."

His purebred Hereford herd started in 1979, just two months after his marriage, at a farm in the Sandhill community in Rankin County. While



breeder William Adair purchased the cattle and maintained genetics in the Grandview herd.

With the exception of one orphaned Angus calf that stayed on the farm, Waggoner was basically out of the cattle business. In 2012 when Grandview dispersed, Joe purchased many of his cow families back and once again Waggoner Cattle Company was back in the purebred business.

Waggoner Cattle Company uses artificial insemination on about 200 cows each year. He believes this has given him a chance to improve his genetics and see advancement in the quality of his herd. Embryo transfer has been used on elite donor cows to help advance the genetics more quickly and create a more uniformed herd.

"We breed cattle for the beef industry," said Joe. "Carcass performance, longevity, cost effectiveness and low maintenance cattle are what we strive for, and we try to enhance the

Hereford breed with our cattle."

Joe is also quick to point out that the Hereford breed has made great strides in the last 15 years with marbling, feed efficiency, quality grades, and calving ease. The breed has worked hard to show the value of Herefords in a cross-breeding program

for commercial producers.

Bulls are developed and sold through partner farms production sales. Bulls are developed by the partners after weaning and most are sold at 12 to 14 months of age. "Our bulls do better with our partner sales out west, and we average \$4,000 to \$6,000 on sales," said Joe.

Many of Waggoner Cattle Company females are developed and marketed in north Mississippi by CMR, which are long-time Hereford breeders.

Joe, along with his sister Mary Jane McDaniel, plan to continue to improve the family farm by renovating the log home that his father and grandfather

lived in, as well as continue to add additional acres.

Over the years, the family has utilized several conservation practices to improve the farm. Some of the efforts started over 25 years ago with soil protection and waterways. The farm is situated along 2 to 3 miles of large creeks, and Joe has gotten advice from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help improve erosion and soil fertility. During the past few years, 500 acres of cutover has been added to the farm and turned into pasture land for grazing.

"We are investing in our future by



what we do today," said Joe. "We take a common-sense approach to conservation and we have fenced off waterways, taken soil tests, and fed in designated areas, along with other practices to improve the land."

No matter where he travels to or who he meets Joe advocates for the cattle industry. He is a member of the American Hereford Association, American Angus Association, and the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association. Joe currently serves as a board member of the American Hereford Association.

"With board members from across the country, everyone's opinion, like a judging team, is better when everyone works together for the greater good," said Joe.

For more information on Waggoner Cattle Company you can visit their website at: <https://waggonercattleco.com>.

