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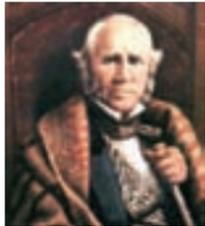
Volume 18, Edition 38

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TEXAS TRAILS

Opium wars, Texas style

5A



REAVIS WORTHAM

Urban wildlife

6A



NATURAL LANDSCAPERS

Hoofed friends can prune shrubs

7A



Wild About Wagyu

Ranching couple extoll the virtues of raising these pricey imports from Japan

By **CLAY COPPEDGE**
 Country World Staff Writer

Wagyu cattle are not part of Texas legend. They never roamed the native prairies nor were they driven up the Chisholm Trail to northern markets. In fact, Wagyu didn't show up in this country until fairly recently.

Raised half a world away in Japan, the cattle have always been considered both exotic and pricey. Because Kobe beef, considered by many to be the world's best and certainly the most expensive beef, comes from a certain strain of Wagyu, the cattle have been a part of foo lore for centuries. The American Wagyu beef producers are not turning out Kobe beef and don't market it as such, but the Wagyu name still carries weight with consumers, foodies and health advocates.

Jim and Joan Chisholm — no relation to Jesse of Chisholm Trail fame, as far as Jim knows — are among a small group of Texas ranchers who raise Wagyu cattle, both for sale as beef and for breeding purposes.

As Jim tells it, they are "accidental" cattle raisers; certainly they are accidental breeders. They started out with mixed Angus cattle at their place near Wimberley, Chisholm Cattle Company, but took a more serious look at it after one request for meat from their pasture turned into 200 customers.



"Tasty and tender" is how Jim Chisholm describes his Wagyu cattle, but he also says their very calm and gentle, adapt well to hot and humid temperatures and will mature — and marble — longer than Angus stock.

-- Photo Courtesy of Jim and Joan Chisholms

"That's when we asked ourselves: Can we produce better beef?" Jim says.

He did some research, and the more he found out about Wagyu, the more interested he became. He got in touch with the American Wagyu Association on a Wednesday and was at the group's annual conference that Friday. He talked to some American producers, including some in

Please see **WAGYU**, 2A

Despite drought, recession and farm bill uncertainty, land values continue to rise

By **CLAY COPPEDGE**
 Country World Staff Writer

The thing about land, the saying goes, is that they're not making any more of it. For people who want to make a living off the land, it's not getting any cheaper, either.

Even in the wake of the current drought, a recent recession and uncertainty about the future of the farm bill, rural land is still going for a pretty penny, according to a report from Farmers National

Company.

The study found that farmland owners rushed to sell land during the last three months of 2012 partly to minimize the risk of impending tax changes, and that high level of activity could lead to a shorter supply of available land this year.

Derrick Volchoff, vice-president of real estate operations at Farmers National Company, said many landowners who were planning to sell land in

Please see **LAND**, 3A



A study by Farmers National Company found farmland owners rushed to sell land during the last three months of 2012 and that high level of activity could lead to a shorter supply of available land this year.

-- Country World File Photo

DFA pays \$140 million to settle lawsuit, says it did no wrong

From Staff and Wire Reports

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A major milk cooperative avoided going into court over a civil lawsuit filed by its own members by reaching a settlement, saying the co-op did no wrong while agreeing to pay millions to the plaintiffs.

Dairy Farmers of America's board of directors and management announced Jan. 22 the cooperative had reached the settlement agreement in the class action lawsuit against DFA in the southeastern United States

Under the terms of the settlement, filed Jan. 21 with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee, DFA will pay \$140 million

to the plaintiff class. An additional, refundable \$9.3 million per year for two years will be placed in a fund to incentivize stronger Class I utilization rates in Federal Orders 5 and 7.

"DFA made no admission of wrongdoing in the settlement," according to a press release issued by the cooperative.

Also included in the agreement are remedial elements regarding reporting, accounting and communication of certain business information and functions. Many of these components are consistent with new policies and procedures DFA management voluntarily developed and implemented previously "to emphasize a culture of openness and transparency within the Cooperative."

Syndicated agriculture columnist Alan Guebert outlined the details of the case in an article published Nov. 8 in Country World.

Dairy farmers in the Northeast and Southeast United States had filed two separate antitrust suits by dairy farmers against their own coop, DFA, and its biggest milk customer, Dean Foods, alleging "a decade of cronyism and insider dealing that left the bosses in buttermilk and the dairymen-coop owners in dust."

The saga began when four regional milk marketing cooperatives, representing about 30 percent of all fluid milk in America, merged to form DFA in 1998.

Please see **DFA**, 3A

Court documents alleged DFA chief Gary Hanman (right) helped milk cooperative members to enrich dairy executives. Meanwhile, an estimated one-third of the dairies in states covered in the two lawsuits went out of business during the same time period.



Wagyu

From Page 1A

Texas, and decided: "This is it."

"Tasty and tender. That's what you're looking for, right?" he says.

Wagyu translates literally as "Japanese cow." First imported to America in 1975, several U.S. herds were developed in the 1990s, with most of the beef imported back to Japan. The Japanese have since become more protective of the Wagyu genetics, but Wagyu raisers have found a small but growing market for their beef.

Generally considered the best beef money can buy, Wagyu's reputation has soared because of recent studies that found dramatic health differences between beef from Wagyu and that of other breeds. The marbling of Wagyu beef is flaked and interspersed throughout the meat rather than being concentrated in one area. The unique marbling characteristics account for the heightened flavor and its high levels of oleaginous unsaturated fat,

omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids account for the added health benefits.

Because Kobe beef is so expensive and specific to a certain region, the U.S. Department of Agriculture doesn't allow American producers to use "Kobe" alone to describe American-grown beef. It's usually labeled as American Style Kobe Beef, and it still commands a premium price.

The Chisholms raise their beef for the local market but much of the business is dedicated to producing seed stock for other ranchers. Some of their customers want to raise full-blooded Wagyu and others want a bull to put on their Angus cattle. The Chisholms have tapped into that market by selling bulls, heifers and semen.

"We have about 60 mama cows we're working with," Jim said. "We produce about 10 or 15 bulls a year. We can never produce enough. There's a tremendous market."

At an auction in Idaho in December, full-blooded, de-



Jim and Joan Chisholm are members of a small circle of Texas ranchers who raise Wagyu cattle, both for sale as beef and for breeding purposes.

-- Photo Courtesy of Jim and Joan Chisholms

horned black Wagyu heifers sold for an average of \$15,428. The Red Wagyu, which the Chisholms also raise, are rarer than the blacks and command even higher prices. A Red Wagyu heifer sold for \$44,000 at a Texas sale in April. That kind of money tends to excite produc-

ers, but even if they were aware of all the fuss, Chisholm said, the Wagyu would take everything in stride.

and the black show a welcome tolerance for heat, he said.

"You'll see them out in the pasture when other cows are standing in the stock tank or sitting under a tree, and the Wagyu will still be out there grazing," he said. "The red Wagyu have a few different qualities than the blacks. They're a little wider in the rear end and they are more maternal — they produce more milk. The marbling qualities are just as good."

The Chisholms still process a couple of steers a month for sale to customers. They sell quarters or halves of both the Wagyu and Angus. A quarter share of the Wagyu costs about \$1,000, including processing fees. A one-eighth share averages a little more than \$500. An Angus quarter generally costs between \$550 and \$600. Demand is good, but Jim said he and Joan choose not to expand the operation much beyond its current



Jim Chisholm shows one of his Red Wagyu at a livestock show. The Red Wagyu are rarer than the blacks and command even higher prices. A Red Wagyu heifer sold for \$44,000 at a Texas sale in April.

-- Photo Courtesy of Jim and Joan Chisholms

"One of the added benefits is that they are very calm animals. They're nothing like Angus or Brahman, and I can't explain why, but I've never run into a Wagyu that will lower its head, paw the ground and snort," he said. "They're very gentle. They're raised in Japan where it's hot and humid, and they do well in Texas, even in South Texas. I have friends who raise them in Idaho and Montana, and they stand up to the winters up there, too. I also have friends in Florida, where they have more rain and it's more humid. They're extremely adaptable."

Wagyu continue to mature — and marble — longer than Angus, Jim said. Angus stop maturing at 18 to 20 months, but Wagyu can continue maturing until they are 3 or 4 years old, becoming tastier all the time.

Three years ago, Jim came across a red heifer at a friend's place in Texas and assumed it was a Red Angus, but no, it was a Red Wagyu. So he started raising Red Wagyu along with the blacks and has found them even better suited to the heat than the Black Wagyu or Angus, though both the red

size.

"We choose not to get real big," he said. "We still like to sell to people who we can ask how the kids are doing. By doing things the way we do it, we're able to keep the prices down. And we continue to get people who are interested in starting their own herds."

"Wagyu make up about one half of 1 percent of all the cattle sales in the country, but the market is growing. We're willing to help anybody who wants to get started in this business. There is room for anybody who is serious about it."

For more information on the Chisholms and their Wagyu cattle, visit their website at chisholmcattle.com.

Those who want to learn more about Wagyu beef can attend the annual Texas Wagyu Association Production Sale, "The Steaks are High." The sale will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 13, at the Tenroc Ranch in Salado in Bell County. Previews will be held the day before the sale on Friday, April 12, and on the morning of the sale. Contact Bubba Kay for more information by calling 512-801-1424.

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<p>ACROSS</p> <p>1 grass to tend</p> <p>5 NFL Hall of Fame site: Stanton, _____</p> <p>6 all the judges of a TX Ct. of Appeals: "en _____"</p> <p>7 TXism: "up _____ snuff"</p> <p>8 TXism: "active as a fox in a _____ house"</p> <p>9 courses of travel</p> <p>15 Comanche's historic log courthouse: "Old _____"</p> <p>16 in east Hidalgo Co.</p> <p>19 TXism: "if _____, he'll bark"</p> <p>21 medical pictures</p> <p>22 TX film stunt pilot, Tom</p> <p>27 timbre</p> <p>28 NE Fort Worth suburb: _____ City</p> <p>29 snapshots</p> <p>30 TXism: "got a _____ big as Texas" (kind)</p> <p>32 TXism: "he's _____ spring chicken"</p> <p>33 New _____, TX</p> <p>36 this Clay was only person prosecuted for death of JFK</p> <p>37 infielder Caminiti who played for Astros & Rangers</p> <p>38 "Old Yeller" actress Dorothy</p> <p>39 soft in the noggin?</p> <p>41 original call letters for Houston's CW TV station, KIAH</p> <p>42 domesticated</p> <p>45 this Warren headed JFK commission</p> <p>46 Jason Witten pos.</p>	<p>47 Huntsville newspaper</p> <p>48 gun rights gr. (abbr.)</p> <p>49 South American Republic</p> <p>52 stuck in mud</p> <p>53 Ivanhoe, TX was named for a novel by _____ Walter Scott</p> <p>54 Valley lake: El _____ del Rey</p>	<p>13 UT Heisman winner Campbell who played for the Houston Oilers</p> <p>14 bed board</p> <p>15 TX country singer Mark who sang "Blame it on Texas"</p> <p>16 TX Katherine Helmond's character on "Who's the Boss?"</p> <p>17 TX actor in the "Mighty Ducks" films</p> <p>18 this Marie was "a little bit country"</p> <p>20 TXism: "_____ a bull give milk?" (no)</p> <p>22 TX soft drink (abbr.)</p> <p>23 founder of giant TX Belo media group (init.)</p>	<p>34 TX's "lone star" has _____ points</p> <p>36 TXism: "let '_____ rip!"</p> <p>37 Dallas public TV & FM station</p> <p>40 Maureen O'_____ starred in '50 film: "Rio Grande"</p> <p>43 bomb type</p> <p>44 this TX Lawson won "Nashville Star" TV program in 2008</p> <p>50 country singer, Haggard</p> <p>51 Darin of TX-filmed "State Fair" (init.)</p>
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