

Beef tour to Montana

By: Tom Mills, County Extension Agent for Agriculture/
Natural Resources

Nineteen Rockcastle County Beef Cattle Association and Young Farmers Association members visited ranches in Montana July 17-22 to learn about beef cattle production in Big Sky Country. At Leachman's, which is noted as the world's largest seed stock producer, the group looked over 1200 bulls available for sale. This fall over 5000 will be grouped in Leachman's feed yard and auctioned in their special sale. A visit to the Bridger USDA Plant Materials Center allowed the group to see forage and wildlife plots. Beef cattle production, as well as tourism from hunting, is a big source of income in Montana and the Center research develops plans for both.

A visit to Beartooth International Angus Ranch in Harrison, Montana found a Kentucky connection. Farm manager, John Carroll, showed the group an Angus bull used at Boyd's Angus in Maysville last fall and shipped back to Montana for the spring breeding season. A visit to the High Country to see cows and calves, found 3 cowboys holding 300 momma cows plus their calves standing in a 600 to 800 acre mountain pasture. John showed the group calves from several of their top bulls.

At Willow Creek, the group visited Cooper Hereford to see a herd with a breeding line which has been closed since the mid 1940's. To everyone's surprise, this horned Hereford ranch

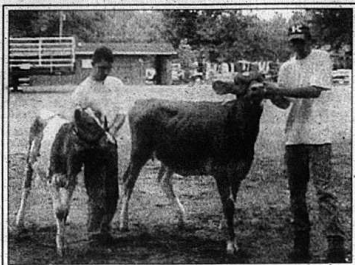
had some of the best cattle our group viewed. Just looking at the calf crop and replacement heifers showed how serious Montana beef producers are about improved genetics.

Bobby Sitz at Sitz Angus gave a tour of the cow herd as well as sharing information on bulls they have placed in 4 different AI studs.

Sitz is the third largest seed stock producer in the U.S. and, as do most of the ranches visited, have special sales to market their top bulls and replacement heifers. Farmers on the tour found that with an Internet connection, viewing livestock for sale and sale catalogs are just a click away.

A visit to Ed and Beverly Billingsly's commercial operation topped most everyone's list as best stop. Setting under cottonwood trees in the Billingsly's back yard, Ed shared how water rights and irrigation changed the Montana desert land into farm land. Ed discussed the day-to-day farm activities he and the local ranchers do in their cattle operation.

Other sight seeing included a tour by Extension Agriculture Agent, Cameron Clark around the tobacco root loop, Virginia City and Ennis. The group caught a rodeo in Cody, Wyoming and one day in Yellowstone National Park to round out a once-in-a-lifetime trip.



John Adams and Matthew Hayes are shown in the show ring.



County novice winners in the Broadhead Dairy Show were: Charity Adams, Brittany Adams and B.B. Cameron.



Winners of the Railbird Judging Contest were from right: Chris McGuire, Sr. Division, Melissa Crutcher, Jr. Division and Randal Adams, Adult Division. Also pictured is Charity Adams.

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Beef Cattle and Young Farmers Association members on the Montana beef tour included, front row from left: Tom Mills, Jr., Regina Lay, Dustin Reynolds, Carol Sigmon, Sharon and Kevin Adams, Roy Reynolds, and Clinton Mullins. Back row from left: Raul Nicely, Herman Smith, Tom Mills, Doug Smith, Sheila Speed, Bonnie Sigmon, Ed Whitaker, Donnie Hurst, Tim Mink, and Garry and Sheila Hurst.



Heather Adams of Rockcastle County showing her Brown Swiss at Broadhead Dairy Show.

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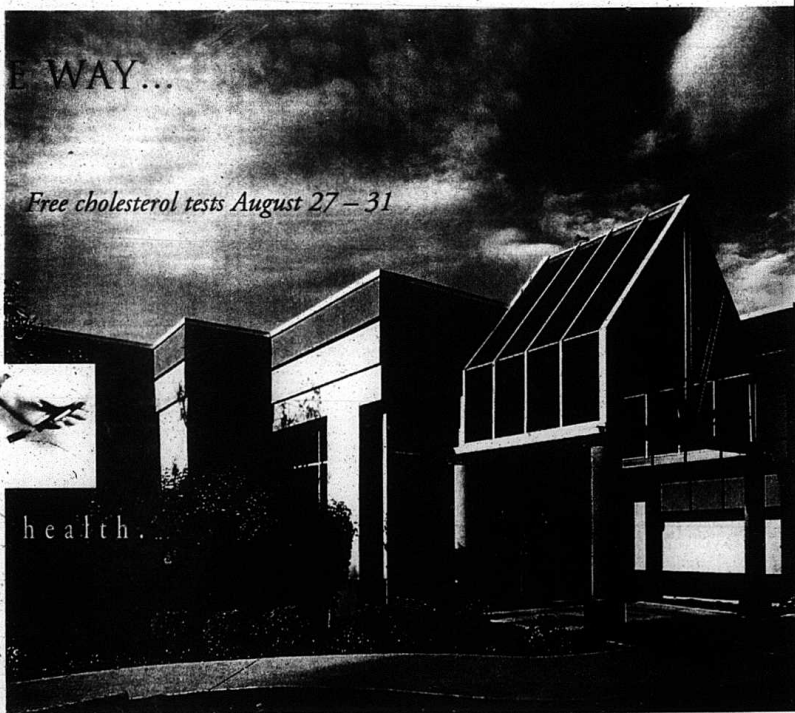
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