

LIVESTOCK

Warehams grow bulls on grass

By **BRENDA BLACK**

JARED and Jill Wareham are educators. Jared taught science before resigning to pursue an ag marketing career. His wife, Jill, continues to teach at Osceola Elementary School. But they are students, as well, testing an experiment in which they live smack in the middle. Their real-world classroom could mean greater success in the beef business. The Warehams operate their lab on 160 acres in St. Clair County.

All of the property, including their front yard, and another nearby 120 acres is devoted year-round to intensely managed grazing of Angus, Gelbvieh, Simmental and composite cows and calves. Jared Wareham produces bulls for Flying H Genetics. As Missouri regional marketing manager for the company, he partners with a network of producers.



GOOD GRAZIER:

In his search to be an efficient beef producer, Jared Wareham, St. Clair County cattleman, has become a student of grazing management.

Key Points

- St. Clair County beef farm uses intensive grazing system to produce bulls.
- Bulls are developed on forage to be range-ready for customers.
- Extra effort is put into grazing management and marketing.

Wareham wants "headache-free" bulls. He and like-minded cooperators develop the bulls predominantly on grass with complementary supplementation, since a bull spends nearly his entire life in a pasture and must be prepared for that environment.

"In addition to producing quality beef products, cattle are harvesters of forage and maintain the balance between plant and animal worlds," Wareham notes. "Allowing that can drastically lower input costs and put dollars back into your pocket."

The result is a diverse pasture community of grass and legume species instead of the common monoculture environment. Grasses don't choke each other out, and as a natural consequence of grass-based management, a herd is culled to thrive on forage efficiently.

Al Decker, University of Missouri Extension regional livestock specialist, began working with the Warehams four years ago. He helped them determine

rotational grazing parameters and establish paddocks. "Jared is optimistic and creative about his business plans," Decker says. "He has a real chance at making this work."

Forage plan

The Warehams' pastures haven't seen commercial fertilizer in two years. Cows deposit nutrients and organic matter into the soil, and they aren't allowed to overgraze, which abuses plants.

When Jared, Jill and their daughter, Mikah, arrive on their ATV, the herd waits in line, like factory workers at lunchtime. When the hot wire shifts, the cattle dive in. The team moves solar-powered electric fence two times a day, about 20 feet beyond where the cattle just grazed. The cows group tightly, mowing from one end to the other on a fresh, green strip of legumes and grasses.

The Wareham family is not entirely alone. A handful of grazing enthusiasts in St. Clair County meet monthly to exchange ideas and take pasture walks. Decker says the small group assists those struggling to find information necessary to move forward.

Even with a good concept, marketing remains key to the livestock producers' success. "People in ag have good ideas," Decker says, "but they aren't good at marketing them. Jared has the capa-



BULL POWER: Angus, Gelbvieh, Simmental and composite breed bulls are developed predominantly on forage on the Wareham farm.

bility and he's willing to do that."

Full circle

The Wareham cows are slick and their udders full. Contented calves dine alongside. Foot-high fescue and thick clover in mid-July eliminate the need for brush hogs or mowers. Wareham prefers the natural way. The scientist in him intensively turns his bovine management into a real-world science experiment, and the optimist plans to tell the world.

Black writes from Butler.

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