

2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show

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Wyoming Ranch Earns ESAP Award

Thaler Land & Livestock Co. of LaGrange, Wyo., is named the 16th annual National Environmental Stewardship Award winner.

by Tanya Augustson

NASHVILLE, TENN. (Feb. 1, 2007) — Thaler Land & Livestock Co. is the national winner of the 2006 Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP). The ranch was officially announced the winner Feb. 1 at a reception during the 2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention. Sponsored by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), Dow AgroSciences and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the annual ESAP awards honor cattle producers whose stewardship practices are inventive, cost-effective and contribute to environmental conservation.

In spring 2006, the Thaler family was chosen as one of seven regional winners, representing the NCBA's Region V. They were nominated by the Wyoming Stock Growers Association.

"Over the years, the Thaler family has been an ambassador of stewardship, reaching out to educate schoolchildren, community groups, government employees, fellow producers, anyone that will listen," noted the ESAP selection committee. "They have an open-door ranch, where spreading the message about stewardship is a number one priority."

Their southeastern Wyoming ranch stands at an elevation of 4,800 feet (ft.) and has suffered drought conditions for more than five years now.

"Despite a chronic lack of rainfall, the family has spent 40 years working to wisely use every drop of irrigation water on the ranch," Stacey Katseanes, ESAP coordinator,



PHOTO COURTESY OF NCBA

►The Thaler family of Thaler Land & Livestock Co., LaGrange, Wyo., received the National Environmental Stewardship Award during a special reception Thursday evening, Feb. 1.

notes. "Their exemplary practices include an intensive grazing system under center-pivot sprinklers."

"The Thalers define teamwork, creating alliances and working with more than a dozen different government agencies, community groups and organizations on major conservation efforts," explains Dave Petty, chairman of the ESAP selection committee. "The family has been committed to the implementation of sound agricultural practices for many years now, and we are pleased to honor them as the 2006 ESAP national winner."

Homesteaded in 1916, Thaler Land & Livestock has been active in area conservation efforts since its founder, Joe Matje, worked to establish the South Goshen Conservation District nearly a century ago. Today, the third and fourth generations are represented by Dennis and Sandra Thaler, along with daughter and son-in-law Brandy and Kevin Evans, who together operate the 1,500-head commercial cattle ranch.

"Thaler Land & Livestock Company is certainly a role model for the industry," Katseanes says. "Not only does their long-

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term commitment to the land embody the true meaning of environmentalism, but it serves as an exceptional example for cattle operations across the nation.”

Thaler Ranch uses gated pipe irrigation, low-pressure center-pivot sprinklers and flood irrigation practices to irrigate orchard grass, regar brome and alfalfa. This allows them to let the native pastures go unused until Sept. 15. This practice reduces overgrazing and provides more feed for their cattle herd during the winter months.

“Another standout achievement is their management of noxious weeds, an increasing concern for landowners in this area of Wyoming and across the West,” said the ESAP selection committee. “They took on a challenging long-term project to eliminate leafy spurge on one of their meadows. They tried several techniques — including spraying, leveling 30 acres to irrigate, plowing, and fertilizing — and after working for two years, they eliminated the spurge. In true ESAP form, the family worked in cooperation with local, state and

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federal agencies to achieve this stewardship goal.”

The Thalers own a feedlot and backgrounding operation and have also managed environmental challenges that come with owning both. “With the cooperation of the Natural Resource Conservation Service they have designed a feedlot ensuring all runoff is contained by a dike and eventually used to fertilize a nearby meadow,” Katseanes says. “A windbreak was planted to provide shelter for the cattle and serve as a buffer against soil leaching. They have an integrated nutrient-management

plan that outlines uses for animal waste byproducts.”

“The Thaler family makes progressive annual adjustments that have a long-lasting impact on the ranch’s sustainability,” Petty says. “That’s what this award is all about. Consistently improving upon the improvements you have made in years past to better conserve our landscapes.”

“We are very pleased to unveil the ESAP national winner tonight,” Katseanes says, “and we strongly encourage a visit out to this Wyoming ranch so you can see these successful practices in action on a thriving operation.”

The Environmental Stewardship Award Program is now in its 16th year. Nomination forms for the 2007 awards are due on March 17, 2007. Any organization, group or individual can submit a nomination on behalf of a U.S. cattle producer. To obtain this year’s application, go to www.beefusa.org/esap or contact NCBA’s Washington office at (202) 347-0228.



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