

History of the Ranch

hound

noun

a horizontal bar or brace, usually one of a pair, for strengthening the running gear of a horse-drawn wagon or the like.



Wagonhound Land and Livestock's roots go back to the late 1800s when the cattle drives came up from Texas and the pioneers traveled through on the Oregon Trail. As settlers moved across the land, a tough-to-cross creek became well-known as the Wagon Hound Creek because many wagons broke their hounds as they crossed. Today, this creek is located only yards from Wagonhound headquarters and the ranch brand, "quarter circle, bar, quarter circle," is the territorial brand, originally registered in 1909, that loosely resembles a wagon hound.

Consisting of more than 200,000 mostly deeded acres, the Wagonhound is located along Wyoming's Laramie Range on the east edge of the Rocky Mountains with an elevation varying from 5,000 to 9,000 feet as well as ranch property in Montana. The very diverse, scenic ranch contains a wonderfully mixed landscape of mountains, rock formations, lush meadows, rolling prairies and abundant live water.

Ranch owners, Catherine and Art Nicholas, purchased the ranch in 1999 with an eye to the future. Most of the land that was bought had originally been owned by families that had been in the area for more than 100 years. Wagonhound's philosophy emphasizes conservation as the way to preserve the land, wildlife, livestock and the western way of life. Their dedication to this is established through grazing and range management and the improvement of water distribution.

While the Wagonhound has many state-of-the-art facilities, much about the ranch has not changed since the 1800s...the current owners have seamlessly blended time-honored values and traditions with the 21st century. This is demonstrated as one travels throughout the ranch seeing tiny wooden schoolhouses from decades past standing proudly intact; the stagecoach stop where a notorious Wyoming train robber fought his last gun battle hides behind a grove of trees next to the old post office; the 1880s bunkhouse and red barn stand guard at the ranch's main gate. All newer construction, such as ranch homes, barns and outbuildings, are painstaking re-creations of original ranch buildings.

As time has passed and technology has developed so has the ranch. Owner Art Nicholas, the son of a Nebraska rancher, knows that the Wagonhound needs to be as diverse as it's terrain in order to be an economically viable operation, one that with proper care would last his family for generations. Looking for better, more efficient ways to operate the ranch as well as expanding the cattle and horse breeding operations and adding quality ranch and farm lands is always a priority for the ranch.

The ranch is made up of four divisions
Horses | Cattle | Farming | Outfitting



Horse Division

The objective of Wagonhound Land and Livestock's horse breeding program, consisting of more than 175 American Quarter Horses, is to raise quality horses for both the ranches use and that of the public.

Broodmares and stallions carrying the Wagonhound brand routinely produce horses that are essential to the day-to-day operations of the ranch but also exhibit the ability and talent to compete successfully in some of the most prestigious cutting, reining, reined cow horse and ranch competitions.

Wagonhound's breeding program was developed with the goal in mind of building on the pedigrees that have been ever-present in top ranch and performance horses and to compliment and improve the breed. Knowing how important the broodmare band is to any remuda the Wagonhound invested in "Mare Power" and has anchored its program with some of the most prominent mares in the industry.

In 2013 Wagonhound hosted it's first production sale, with guest consignor 6666 Ranch, offering approximately 100 head of broke ranch geldings, broodmares, 2-year-olds, yearlings and weanlings. The sale had registered buyers from 37 states streaming from New York to California and assisted in putting Wagonhound horses in the hands of people across the country, which is one of Wagonhound's primary motivations. Another sale has been scheduled for 2015.



Cattle Division

The Wagonhound is one of the finest Red Angus commercial beef producers with a foundation herd of 3,000 cows and about that many yearlings at different times during the year. All cattle are selected and managed to produce high quality replacement heifers and premium beef. The ranches replacement stock comes from within the breeding program and is supported by using bloodline diversity from the finest bulls available.

While several thousand acres are in timber, or mountains and canyons that are inaccessible to cattle the stocking rate is 35-40 acres per animal unit (cow/calf).

Wagonhound Land and Livestock's two feedlots are located in the heart of the farming division making the movement of daily feed rations more efficient. Each feedlot keeps a cavity of horses for daily management of the yards. The Morton Yard has a capacity of 6,000 head, and the River Ranch Feedlot has a capacity of 1,500 head. In years that there is an excess capacity in farm products (barley grain, silage and alfalfa hay) and range grass, outside calves are bought and run through the feedlots and back to the mountain ranges. Generally the ranch will run an additional 4,000-6,000 head of yearlings, and station them at various feedlots in Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming during the winter months and then move them to the grass in the spring.

The ranch retains approximately 60 percent of the heifers as replacements and sells the balance as open heifers for either breeding purposes or finished fat cattle. All replacement heifers are bred by artificial insemination.





The cattle division is strictly commercial, but the ranch uses registered bulls paying close attention to pedigrees and studying optimal carcass EPDs; the bull selection process is geared toward optimal female production and maternal traits.

Farming Division



The farm is primarily alfalfa production with rotating crops including corn silage, barley hay, barley grain and oats. With 33 center pivots covering approximately 5,000 acres the farm produces approximately 20,000 tons of alfalfa annually. Water for the pivot systems is provided mostly through territorial or senior water rights from the North Platte River. Most hay is sold via hay auction to dairies across the country as well as to horse operations looking for premium hay.



In the early days the farm was flood irrigated and required nearly 30 men to operate. Currently with the pivot and pump improvements it is operated by farm manager Greg Richendifer, a third-generation manager on the farm, and five full-time employees.



In addition to alfalfa farming, the ranch irrigates another 2,500 acres of mountain meadows and pastures where much of the livestock run during the fall and winter months. Approximately 75 percent of the flood-irrigated ground is bailed with the balance being grazed due to the tough terrain. Water for these systems consist of small tributaries to the North Platte River with extensive irrigation diversion and ditch systems. These creeks run at peak from April thru August and are subject to snow pack in the mountains on the ranch.

Outfitting Division



The outfitting program is diverse and is handled in house by licensed outfitter Dax McCarty. McCarty helps manage ranch wildlife and guides elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, antelope, bear and fishing trips. The outings include a guide and accommodations, use of rifle range, sporting clays and skeet range, waterfowl hunts and fishing. Accommodations range from wall tents to traditional lodging in bunkhouses and guest lodges to premium houses for private and exclusive stays.

Wagonhound is home to a large elk herd with numbers averaging 4500 head in the winter months. Management practices for the ranch's wildlife have resulted in trophy elk and deer being taken each year and ranking high in national competitions making the area renowned for having Wyoming's most coveted trophy bull elk.



Wagonhound's horses are great ambassadors for their breed as they carry many inexperienced riders into remote areas of the ranch to hunt and retrieve game. Often after a successful hunt, many guests enjoy helping with ranch activity or taking in the serene ranch landscape horseback. Wagonhound has found this is a great way to introduce people to the American Quarter Horse, and it gives clients an experience that lasts a lifetime.