

Stephen Hughes, Chinook Ranch Ltd.



Stephen Hughes and family



Solar panels provide innovative source of power in remote areas of the ranch.



Chinook Ranch Ltd.



Cow calf pair at Chinook Ranch



For Stephen, family and the next generation are the reason for sustainable beef

- Located in Longview, Alberta
- Third generation; Cow-calf, commercial beef grazing
- Owns and runs the farm with his father and wife
- Grazes cows 12 months of the year; for 19 years working in the realm of sustainability
- Member of Foothills Forage Association
- Fun Fact: 4-H leader with their three daughters in the club

“The world is changing and we can be out front and be leaders. I am excited about being part of this process.”

Why did you participate in the McDonald's VSB Pilot?

It is a great opportunity that we as an industry are being offered in my opinion. We are producing food for everyone. We are all consumers, and we have a great story to tell.

We can get in our own way at times about “tradition- this is the way it has always been done.” But the world is changing and we can be out front and be leaders. I am excited about being part of this process.

Describe what the verification was like?

It took a little time but it was one of the most fun days I’ve spent in a long time. Not onerous and time well spent.

What did you like best?

There were good people doing it who understood the industry. The idea that is a celebration of what we are doing right, and sharing it with the public.

What did you take away from the verification?

I am looking at changing some of my record keeping going forward. There’s a lot to celebrate.

What would be helpful for other to know before verification?

Trust the process. Trust yourself that you are doing a good job. Embrace the opportunity. As an industry we need to be progressive.

Alex Robertson Family, Cross U Ranch



Alex, Carol, Morgan and Taryn Robertson



Heifers grazing on late season pasture



Longview 4-H Beef Club hosting informational VSB workshop



Taryn and Morgan with their 4-H heifers

- Located in Longview, Alberta
- Alex Robertson ranches with his wife Carol and twin daughters Morgan and Taryn
- Active members of Longview 4-H Beef Club
- Focus on grazing management and youth involvement on the ranch
- Fun fact: This year's 4-H heifers are named Blueberry and Strawberry

"We've gone to a slower, more sustainable beef product over time. Less inputs and smarter management enable us to move forward in a positive way. Looking to the past will help us in the future."

Why did you participate in the McDonald's VSB Pilot?

Morgan Robertson: To be able to keep our farm going and to have safe, healthy cattle.

What does sustainability mean to you?

Alex Robertson: The production of energy-dense food, done with minimal resources, while maintaining or improving the environment it was raised in.

Carol Robertson: I didn't come from a ranch, so being married to a third generation rancher, I think sustainability means being a caretaker of the land and what we've been given.

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

Alex: It gives us a baseline as to where we are currently. It's a really good tool to show us where we can improve if we choose to.

Mike & Susan Bohm, Hawthorne Ridge Heritage Farm



Mike speaking with Ontario Ag Minister Leal and checking calves



Mike and Susan Bohm with Minister Leal exploring one of the Duck's Unlimited supported restoration areas

- Located in Douro-Dummer, ON
- Small, integrated mixed farming operation on 105 acres of rolling hills, focused on purebred heritage breeds including Red Poll cattle
- Our farm uses brewers mash from local micro-breweries and “Primal Cuts” butcher shop sells our products for retail purchase
- We play a role in Trent University’s Sustainable Agriculture Program exhibiting our environmental stewardship and welcoming students on the farm
- We partner with Ducks Unlimited Canada and Kawartha Stream Stewardship programs
- Fun Fact: Although the breed originated as a cross between the Norfolk and Suffolk breeds, Red Polls are not just for beef! The Queen is a patron of the beef and has a large herd in England that are used for dairy

“We love working with cattle; we love a sizzling steak on the bbq; we respect our land in all seasons and are endlessly fascinated by the subtleties of growth cycles; we want to take an active part in a good future for our children and their children. That’s why sustainability matters to us.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Working to maintain the exceptional meat qualities of heritage breeds in a way that complements our land resources and rewards us economically as well. We have to provide meat at a fair price, while satisfying the quality demands of our customers and meeting our own goals to have an ecologically resilient farm.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

Like many others, we are passionate about our farm and our work and are working hard to grow good cattle in a way that leaves the land fertile for future generations. We want to share our values with our customers and help them gain appreciation for where their food comes from.

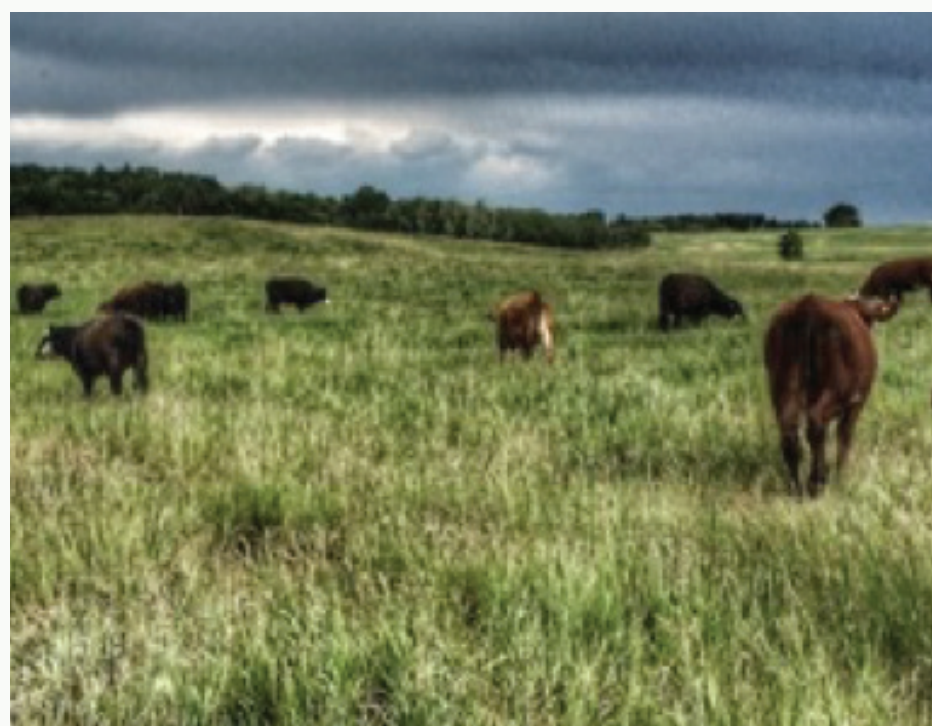
Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

Although small, we take our role serious. The Pilot offered a chance to measure ourselves against standards that will ensure the vitality of the beef industry and the environmental sustainability of the land and hopefully show us areas to improve as well. The Pilot is also a great way to communicate our values and activities with our customers.

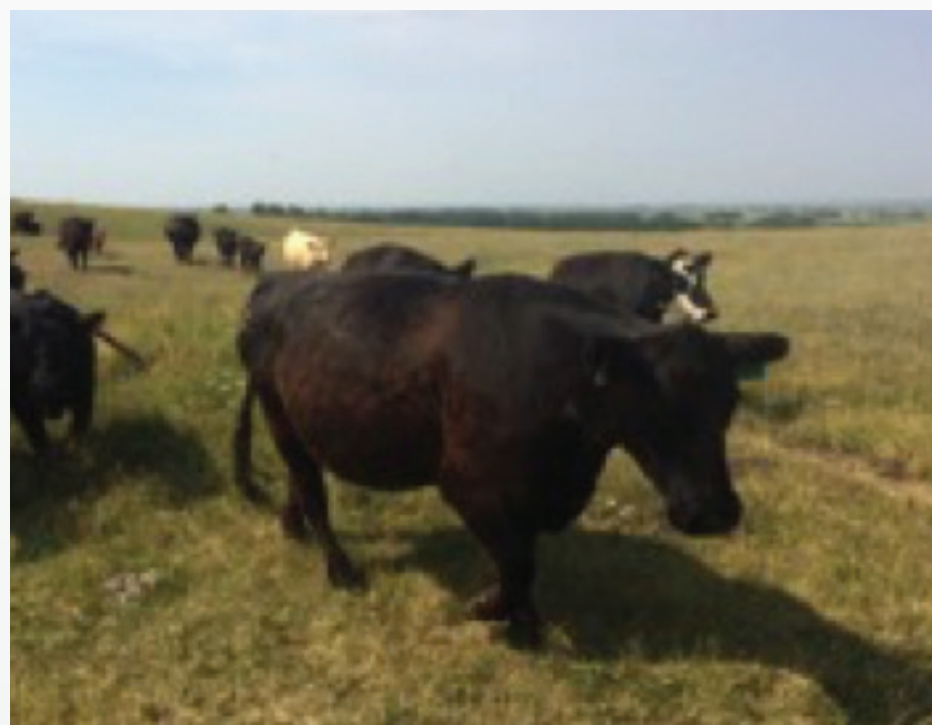
Jill & Kelly Burkhardt, Crooked Lake Farm



The Burkhardt Family



Jill’s degree in Range Science is an asset for their cattle operation



- Located near Wetaskiwin, AB
- Kelly, Jill and their children are 5th and 6th generation ranchers and farm with Kelly’s dad
- Commercial cow-calf operation consisting of purebred red /black Angus cows and Hereford bulls
- Background and grass-finish yearlings
- Farm gate sales of their beef and chicken from their Crooked Lake Farm website
- Fun Fact: Baby number three is due in April!

“Canada is known for growing some of the world’s best agriculture products and I want to keep up with that...showcase it.”

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

I think it makes people accountable for what they are doing. When you are accountable, you think about what you do before you do it.

What did you think of the indicators?

Mostly the indicators were what I expected. The questions were good and they tied everything in well.

What do you think of the pilot?

I think it’s neat that a large corporation is stepping up to do this. I’d say most, if not all of the indicators, are things we are already doing. So why not give credit where credit is due.

Why is a program like this important to the industry?

People are so far removed from agriculture. Hopefully this is a way to tie people back into where their food comes from. I have high hopes for this program and am excited to see where they will take it.

Allan & Colleen Cathcart, AKC Farming and Repairs



Allan and Colleen’s family farm



Best of breeding program, our bull - Cedardale Calypso



Part of the family farm near Kendal, ON



Heifers and steers enjoying quality feed



Calves enjoying summer grazing

- Located in Kendal, ON
- 96 acre farm with 51 commercial Charolais cows
- We sell our stockers locally to KLC Auction Centre
- We use social media to generate interest and awareness of our cattle for sale
- Utilize programs such as VBP, EFP, Traceability and BIXS to manage our farm
- We convert large round bales into small squares. It’s a great exercise and workout
- Fun Fact: Allan’s hobby is making maple syrup

“We wanted to be part of a trustworthy and reputable program. We wanted to be recognized for the hard work we do to raise beef for consumers, and we want to communicate to the public how we manage our operation.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

It means producing quality beef in an environmental and trustworthy way. We treat our livestock with the best of care and compassion. Our farm operates with the intention of not leaving an environmental footprint. Sustainable also means being profitable as well so we can carry forward.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

It’s important to our operation because we look forward to passing our farm to our daughter for the next generation to farm. It gives us great pride being able to do so.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

We wanted to be part of a trustworthy and reputable program. We wanted to be recognized for the hard work we do to raise beef for consumers, and we want to communicate to the public how we manage our operation. Consumers can link the small family farm to McDonald’s 100% Canadian Beef hamburgers.

Travis & Kara Eklund, WineGlass Ranch



The Eklund Family



Cows coming home



Kids enjoying the creek



Loading net wrap for recycling



Moving cows to summer pasture

- Located in Cochrane, AB
- Established in 1885 along the banks of Jumping Pound Creek
- The fifth and sixth generation currently own and operate the ranch 300 cow-calf pairs in partnership with LJ Ranches (Lindsay and Joy Eklund)
- Cows are on pasture June 1 – Christmas. Winter feeding is a mix of swath grazing and round bales
- Long history of working with watershed/riparian area groups
- 2004 recipient of ABP's Environmental Stewardship Award
- Jumping Pound Creek brings year-round entertainment and fun like picnics, fishing, swimming, skating and hockey games
- Fun Fact – Travis and Kara met on E-Harmony

“Canada has the best producers and practices in the world. Sustainable beef means the cattle and land are healthy EVERY year.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Being good stewards and having good practices in place. Good land management results in abundant feed and water for the cattle. Managing the cattle in a safe, calm and humane way minimizes stress and creates healthy cattle. Healthy land and healthy cattle results in sustainable beef.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

Sustainable beef is not just important, it's critical to our operation. We are morally and ethically obligated to take care of our land and cattle. The only way to do that is through sustainability. There is nothing more fulfilling than knowing we have done a good job sustaining the land and animals that dwell there.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

It was an easy choice for us. The Pilot aligned with things we do everyday and it aids the Canadian beef industry in showing the world that we are the best producers in the world. It also helps combat misinformation that is often spread by those who are not knowledgeable about agriculture.

Elise & Kelly Walker, Diamond K Cattle



Elise Walker



Grazing cattle on pivots in Milk River



Cattle on pivots on the pasture



Diamond K Cattle also has a backgrounder operation

- Located in Milk River, Alberta
- Angus based, cow-calf, backgrounder
- Kelly and Elise run the operation full-time, work with Kelly’s dad
- Intense rotational grazing on tame grass and annual crops on dry-land and irrigated acres

“Sustainability means good practice. We are constantly changing and evolving to do things in the best possible way.”

Why did you participate in the McDonald’s VSB Pilot?

It is important to us. We are always working toward raising sustainable beef. It’s giving us the opportunity to add our input. We are very happy with where McDonald’s is going with sustainability. That they know animals deserve proper care - they allow us to treat a sick animal in this program. We are proud that they purchase 100% Canadian beef for their restaurants.

What does sustainability mean to you?

I think of good practice. It is constantly changing and evolving to do things in the best possible way.

Why is sustainable beef important to you?

It’s my livelihood; it’s what we do. Not only are we producers of it, we are consumers. I like to know what beef goes in my deep freezer.

What would you like other producers to know before they start their verification?

It is a lot of information that you cover. But you are trying to show the verifier how you operate – in one day. It was really what we expected.

Erika Strande Stewart & Family, Pine Ranch



Three generations ranching in Merritt



Cattle grazing beneath Salt Top mountain



Teaching the next generation about traceability



Cattle on the move as the clouds set in

- Located in Merritt, BC
- Erika ranches with her parents and husband Cyle
- Cow-calf operation and Heritage Mountain Meats farm-gate beef business
- Dedicated beef industry advocate including local school ag education and Behind the Beef educator
- Cattlemen Young Leader graduate and Young Cattlemen’s Council board member
- Fun fact: Erika blogs at Life on a BC Cattle Ranch with CYL mentor Erica Fossen

“I think it is really important to be involved in things like this because there are new, fresh ideas that could really help the industry in the long run. It didn’t take long. Just do it!”

Why is sustainable beef important to you?

It is the industry I am passionate about and it is what we want to do with our lives. My grandpa ranched here, now my dad, my husband and I do. We have a daughter and hopefully she will be interested. We have to be sustainable to continue.

What does sustainability mean to you?

If we are going to have a future we need to be sustainable economically. As well, how we manage our land and how we care for our animals – so people trust us and know what we are doing is sustainable.

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

I think it is an important opportunity. We can make sure we are really as sustainable as we think we are. It is a checklist to make sure we are doing things right- we want to be part of something new. Be innovative.

Glen & Faye Price, FGP Cattle



Bringing the cows home after another summer grazing season



Cows on summer pasture



Cows leaving fall pasture



Cows grazing standing corn in November



Joseph and Zane working together to get their 4-H steers ready for show day

- Located in Elm Creek, MB
- 40-head purebred Hereford cow-calf operation
- Additional 80-head commercial Hereford and Angus influenced herd
- Raise their sons Joseph and Zane on the farm
- Involved in Portage la Prairie Community Pasture Association and Elm Creek 4-H Beef Club
- Both boys have a full show string of 4-H projects (steer, bred heifer and continuation cow)
- Joseph’s first cow is the same age he is (12)

“Sustainable beef is raising cattle in synergy with the environment while protecting the welfare of our animals and ourselves.”

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

Participating in the Pilot was a way to measure ourselves and better understand what we are doing right and where we can improve.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Sustainable beef is raising cattle in synergy with the environment while protecting the welfare of our animals and ourselves. It is striving to find that balance between conserving the environment, producing high quality beef and sustaining our operation.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family and operation?

We are all stewards of nature, both the land and the animals. It is our responsibility to protect the environment and properly care for the animals that depend on us. If we do not weigh all of those factors and continue to improve on our practices, we cannot be profitable.

Why is a program like this important to the industry?

It’s a way to share our story with consumers – how we raise beef in Canada while protecting the environment, the animals and ourselves.

Graeme Finn, Southern Cross Livestock



- Located in Crossfield, Alberta
- Cow-calf operation and 500-1,000 cattle backgrounded on grass
- Tenant rancher – Runs operation with his family Heather, Morgan and Claire
- Special focus on pasture conservation and range management
- Board member of Foothills Forage Association
- Fun Fact – Graeme loves Rugby



“It’s starts with the soil and then the forage and then the cattle all working together to complete the circle. We are the stewards responsible for continuous improvements so our children can take it to the next level when we are dead and gone.”



Great soil makes great pasture



Winter stockpiled forage



Great pastures deliver great cattle

Why did you participate in the McDonald's VSB Pilot?

We’re using it as a measuring device on how we run our operation to help us consciously do the best we can on our operation. We want to continue to be aware of the program and be involved in the journey.

Describe what the verification was like?

We had a good time, it was a well-rounded discussion with information sharing back and forth between us and the verifiers.

What did you like best?

It’s not what I like so far, but what’s coming in the future as more operations get involved.

What would you change about the pilot?

Nothing yet, but I want to see it kept open to change as it and those involved learn and grow.

What would be helpful for others to know before verification?

Be honest and open, because it’s not judgment day. If others know of ways that can help, why not let them give you advice.

Sherri, Lynn & Dean Grant, Grant Ranch



Our crew after we completed seeding in 2016



Moving a group of cows in to A.I. Summer 2015



Moving cows during winter grazing



Morning sun over calves in feedyard



Moving yearlings to spring pasture

- Located near Val Marie, SK
- Owned by brothers Lynn and Dean Grant and their families
- 1,000 head cow-yearling operation that does backgrounding and grassing of our calves before sale.
- We raise our own hay and seed 5,000 acres of annual crops
- We have diverse employees that come from Ontario, Ukraine and Romania to work with us
- Sherri and her daughter Avery wrote a children’s book, “Where Beef Comes From” that is used by Ag in the Classroom throughout Canada to tell the story of how beef is raised
- Fun Fact: We began our blog grantranch.ca in March 2016 to share our story about ranching in Saskatchewan

“We’ve always focused on leaving a legacy of live, laugh and learn. That’s what continuous improvement is all about.”

Why is sustainable beef important to you and your family?

It showcases what we are doing and aligns with our philosophy. In a business enterprise that requires a highly functioning biological ecosystem for long-term success, it’s necessary to have an approach that maintains sustainability.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

It’s a way of providing more information to the consumer about producer practices that we already monitor and use. We’ve always focused on leaving a legacy of live, laugh and learn. That’s what continuous improvement is all about.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

Because of their approach to working with a complete supply chain that is realistic rather than use ill founded, inaccurate catch-phrases to boost sales.

Darren Ippolito, Moose Creek Red Angus



Darren, Kylie, Candace, Donna and Glenn Ippolito



Red Angus cows grazing stock-piled native range



Charolais grazing spring grass



Pairs graze on native prairie in late summer



Bale Grazing to help spread nutrients over the Ranch

- Located in Kisbey, SK
- 600 head Cow-calf operation with over half purebred Red Angus & Charolais and the balance commercial cows
- 11,000 acres of tame & native rangeland as well as cropland for feed production
- Darren is Chairman of Tecumseh Community Pasture Corp. which controls 21,000 acres of native rangeland
- Fun Fact – Some of our native rangeland is situated in the “Kisbey Flats”, a unique ecosystem that provides important spawning grounds for Walleye and Northern Pike, so properly managing these pastures with late summer grazing is important to us

“Without the production of sustainable beef, our operation will not be globally competitive in the beef market and fail to be socially accepted locally.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Vertically integrated production that factors in environmental, social, financial and animal well-being. You have to strike a balance on all points.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

Without the production of sustainable beef, our operation will not be globally competitive in the beef market and fail to be socially accepted in the local market.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

We got involved to highlight that we are an everyday operation that cares for our land, people and stock. We believe the majority of Canadian beef operations are sustainable by nature, and we have the tools in place to demonstrate it.

John & Tracy Buckley, Quarter Circle X Ranch



Sandra, Trevor, Tracy, John, Robyn
and Eric Buckley



Quarter Circle X Ranch



Spring calves from first calf heifers



Tracy & John checking cattle on
summer range



Commercial cows on branding day

- Located near Calgary, AB
- There are currently four generations living on the ranch
- 650 head cow-calf operation where they background calves to 750-1,000 pounds
- Manage 11,000 acres, of which 60% is leased. This land is used to grow winter feed, a mixture of cereals and tame forages
- Seed-stock provider to Beefbooster Inc. supplying them bull calves with specific criteria for development into herd sires to sell to the beef industry
- Fun Fact: John plays guitar when he's not ranching

"We strive everyday to be sustainable, so that our main resource, the land, remains in a healthy, resilient and vibrant state both today and into the future for those who will follow us."

Why did you participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

It was a natural next step for us. It resonated with what we were trying to achieve on the ranch, yet was coming from the opposite end of the production system.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

From production to consumption, we have to concern ourselves with maintaining a balance between the economic, environmental and social aspects of the entire industry.

Why is a program like this important to the industry?

It's important to understand that each individual or business will have completely different points of balance that make them sustainable as part of the beef industry.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family and operation?

We strive everyday to be sustainable, in order for our main resource, the land, to remain in a healthy, resilient and vibrant state both today and into the future for those that will follow us.

Kevin Porter, Porter Ranches Ltd.



Porter family



Cow grazing in 2 ½' snow



Cows during spring grazing



Big rib-eyed bull, working on one of Alberta's great ranches



Swath grazing on Triticale @ about 180 grazing days/acre

- Located in Stony Plain, AB
- 5th generation family farm established prior to 1903
- 300 cow operation with 1,000 acres of grain land
- Market 70 Simmental and Simmental / Angus bulls annually
- Focus of the breeding program is on carcass quality and traits to improve predictability
- Graze cattle on annual grasses as many days as possible to grow and maintain herd health
- Family commitment to youth development in sports, music and education
- Fun Fact: We travel with our children and encourage them to gain experiences and perspectives away from the ranch

“To be sustainable we must take a strategic approach to improving and protecting land and animal management. Taking a non-complacent approach to safety and community will yield future sustainability.”

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

It's an opportunity to justify and reflect on the annual and ongoing operational ranch practices we have in place. The indicators used create an excellent benchmark for establishing industry production guidelines and helps me measure my practices and define places to improve.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Sustainable beef in Alberta necessitates more grazing days, and to improve our industries credibility, it must be done in a way to complement and improve the land and soil we graze...We have to focus on sound planning and practices that can inform us as caretakers and others as consumers.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family and operation?

It is the essence of our families five generations on the ranch. If we don't adopt production efficiencies we are less profitable. If we don't adopt proper animal husbandry and health care, we jeopardize our place in the industry.

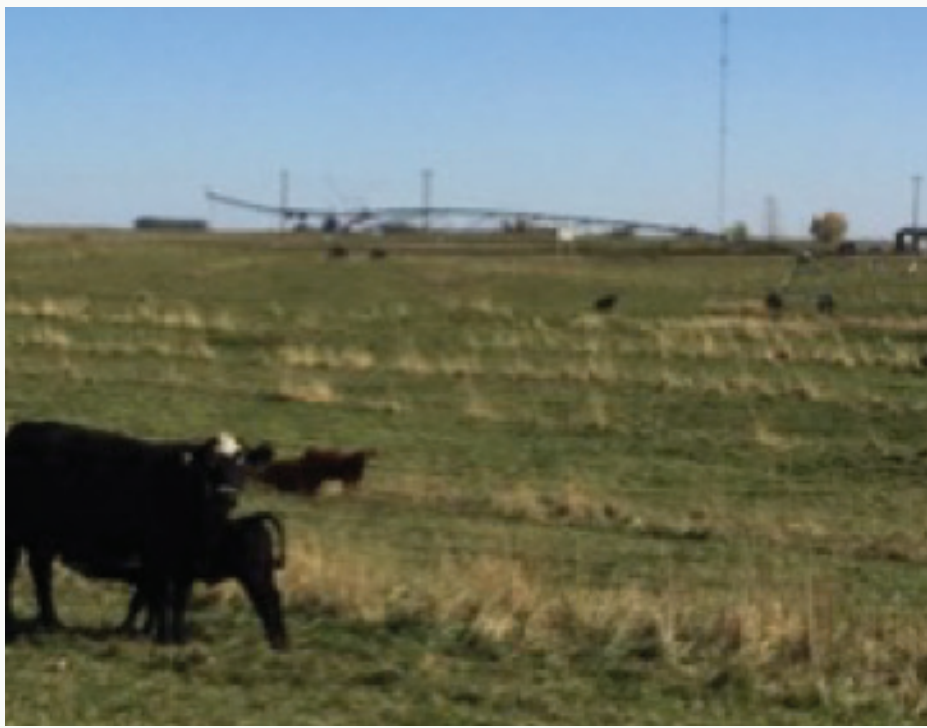
Why is a program like this important to the industry?

It's a way to share our story with consumers – how we raise beef in Canada while protecting the environment, the animals and ourselves.

Leighton Kolk, Kolk Farms Limited



Philipp Lamerding and Leighton Kolk in cattle handling facility



Cow-calf pairs grazing by irrigation pivots



Solar powered watering system



Leighton (far left) and other AMG members touring Hamburger U at McDonald's headquarters in Oak Brook, IL

- Located Iron Springs, Alberta
- Primarily a feedlot ~ market 22k head of finished cattle annually
- Member of Allied Marketing Group (AMG)
- Farm dryland and irrigated acres; grow much of forage needs

“The verification helped us reflect on a few things and say- maybe there is a place where we can do better....It fits into to what we believe here already. Finding ways to continually learn, get better and use less resources for increased production.”

Why is sustainable beef important to you?

Anything that effects our industry is at the top of our radar. Sustainability is a very popular word with everyone from government to consumers. We want to understand what that means and show consumers how we get there.

What does sustainability mean to you?

When we are doing what we do to the best of our ability, but continually finding ways to improve our efficiency, handling, community relations etc. It fits right in with what we believe here.

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

We got involved because we think advocacy is important and the consumer understanding of what we do is important. And we like to be on the leading edge in our industry and this was one of the things we felt we needed to do to be there.

Sean McGrath, Round Rock Ranching



Three generations on the ranch



Moving pairs



Generation six checking greenfeed



Cow-calf pairs on pasture

- Located in Vermilion, AB
- Fifth generation family farm breeding approximately 250 Angus-based cows and background calves
- Based in the prairie parkland, we market feeder cattle, replacement females, grass finished beef, purebred seed stock and ecosystem goods and services
- Home ranch is 80% native rangeland, Meadow Lake ranch is 100% tame grazing land
- First ranch in Alberta to sign on to the ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) program to sell environmental goods and services
- Fun Fact: 2014 Alberta and National TESA award recipient (The Environmental Stewardship Award)

“Sustainable beef provides food, eco-system services and resource management benefits to the public and provides a living and life for our family.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

If our children choose to ranch someday, they will have an opportunity in an even better environment than exists on our operation today.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

It’s important to remember we’re borrowing from our children and grandchildren, rather than spending their inheritance. For us, sustainable beef feeds people and improves the environment at the same time preserving and improving an endangered native prairie ecosystem and creating opportunity for the next generation. That’s a tremendous privilege and responsibility.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

We feel the Pilot would help us to identify strengths and weaknesses that we could focus on and provide a qualified third party review. We’re also excited with the great connections to help us tell the real story of what we do on our ranch.

Jason & Karmen McNabb, McNabb Ranch



Jason and Karmen McNabb



Cattle on native grass



Swath grazing



Calves on grass



Calves lined up at the feed bunk

- Located in Shaunavon, SK
- 450 hd. Cow-calf, backgrounding ranch and dryland grain farm
- Operate the ranch and farm with Jason’s parents and our two children Alex and Kaitie
- Extensive use of bale and swath grazing to extend our grazing season
- Provide stewardship of 2,500 acres of native grass
- Fun Fact: Jason loves restoring old vehicles and is currently restoring a 1950 Chevy truck

“For us, long-term sustainability is all about the soil...Treat the soil right and it will keep working for you for generations - mess it up and it will take generations to recover.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

For us, sustainability over the long term is all about the soil. Whether you grow forage, cattle or crops, if you treat the soil right it will keep working for you – mess it up and it will take generations to recover.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

The majority of our land is not suitable for cropping. Grazing cattle can extract value from the land to support our family, while at the same time maintain or enhance the land’s health and productivity.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

We’re pleased they want to help tell our story. Consumers want to know more about how their food is produced and this is a good way to do that. We will support that effort in any way we can. The cattle industry has been trying to tell their story for years but producers are a tight-lipped group. We are happy to see McDonald’s working at it from the retail end.

Kelly Paxman, Paxman Valley Ranch



Kelly with some of her Braunvieh herd



Curious calves all around



No favorites on the farm, they're all great!



- Located near Calgary, AB
- New ranch founded in 2014
- Small commercial black angus herd and a small purebred Braunvieh herd
- Actively learning about ranching by participating in industry conferences, workshops and meetings
- Member of Farm Management Canada (FMC), Foothills Forage & Grazing Association (FFGA), Canadian Angus Association (CAA), Brown Swiss & Braunvieh association and Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC)
- Fun Fact – I love my cows and probably have as many pictures of them as I do my children

"I love what I do! I hope others can see that raising cattle isn't just a job, it's a passion and a lifestyle!"

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Being committed to raising beef in a natural, healthy environment. Consumers want respect for the treatment of animals and respect for our environment. The beef industry is becoming more aware and responsive of it, but needs to continue seizing opportunities to share about these things.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

We want to maintain and support the good things the industry does for generations to come. We're coming into the industry at a time when consumers are more conscious and want to know more. Our processes create better outcomes for the animals and environment.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

There's always room for improvement and I want to know I'm on the right track. It's a tremendous opportunity to connect with others who care about the industry.

Phil Braig, Douglas Lake Ranch



Phil Braig at the Douglas Lake Office Environmental Stewardship Award Winners



Variety of landscape and environment make Douglas Lake a unique place to raise cattle



A Douglas Lake bull on fall pasture



Part of the award winning Douglas Lake remuda

- Located in Douglas Lake, British Columbia
- Cow-calf and backgrounder operation
- Ranch est. 1884 as a homestead – now in two divisions which have about 9000 mother cows on approximately 1 million acres
- Single largest unit of open grassland in the region
- Fun Fact: Holds a commercial helicopter pilot license

“All those sustainability indicators are related to profitability for us. In my point of view if you are not meeting those indicators you are not maximizing your profit potential.”

Why did you participate in the McDonald’s VSB Pilot?

These things we are already doing- we have been doing them for a long time. It is an important stage where we can provide some input into the process and give some real world scenarios on what we believe are indicators for a credible system. Because whether we like it or not eventually it will effect us.

Why is the VSB pilot important to the beef industry?

It is the direction consumers are going in – they want to know more about the products they are eating and that it is produced in an ethical way. This process helps in showing consumers what we are doing.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

To continually strive to improve our stewardship of the land & the cattle. To use every tool available to us– technologies, genetics- to maximize the profit potential of our cattle with the least amount of inputs.

Cody & Diane Sawley, Clark & Ethel Schlosser, Anchor P Cattle Co.



Four generations at Anchor P Cattle Co.



Doctoring cows



Spring calving



Ethel heeling calves for branding

- Fourth generation ranch that began in 1900
- 550 commercial Black Angus cows and 200 grass yearlings
- Still ranching on the same land they started on 116 years ago
- All four generations are involved in daily management of the ranch
- Year-round grazing on 7,000 acres of native pasture and farm an additional 200 acres
- Summer grazing on lower Livingstone River forestry allotment, winter grazing on Waldron Ranch
- Fun Fact – Cody is an auctioneer, Diane works as a sales clerk, Ethel is a fantastic cook, Clark is a former Professional Rodeo Cowboy and judge, Remington and Colt work on neighbor ranches, Jesse is in school to be a hair dresser

“We’ve been in the cattle business since 1900. We need to be sustainable with the changing times and challenges if we are to pass our family business to future generations.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

A cattle operation that is raising quality beef while maintaining and improving a healthy environment

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

It’s important to provide quality beef that comes from a quality ranch. We’re working to feed the world and we have to be good stewards and responsible for the products we grow.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

Because it is important for us to stay current and make improvements to make us more sustainable. We’re proud of our cattle and want consumers to know that when they buy Canadian beef they are buying quality from good people who care about the cattle, land and people.

Van Raay Paskal Farms Ltd.



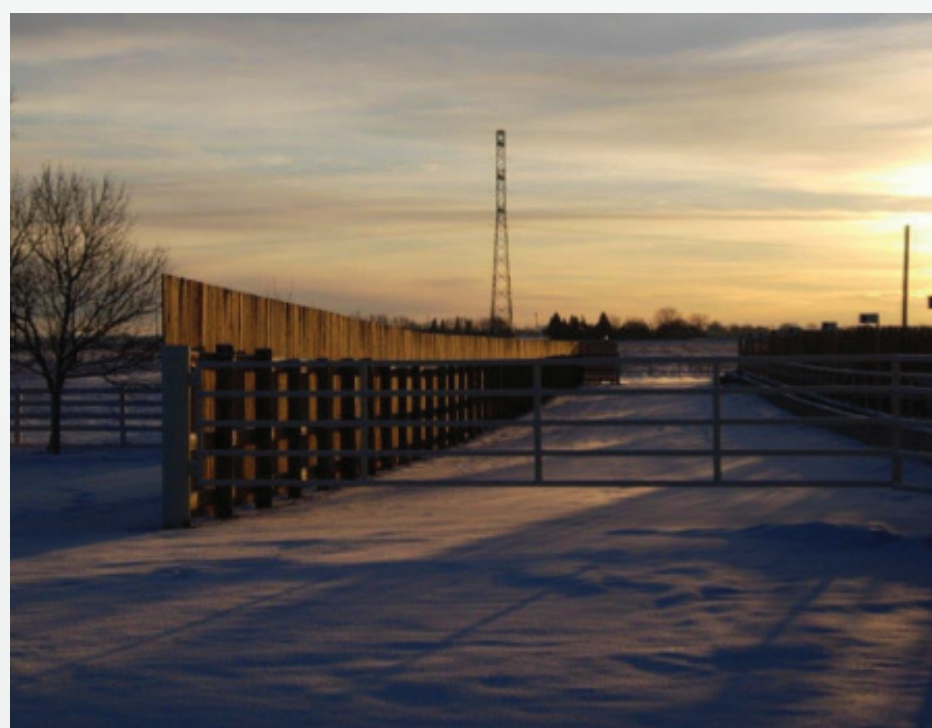
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Westlot near Picture Butte, AB



Feeding time



Winter morning at the home lot



Harvest time

- Located near Picture Butte, AB
- Van Raay Paskal Farms Ltd. was formed when Cor Van Raay Farms and Paskal Cattle Company combined the pioneering cattle feeding heritage of Cor Van Raay Family with the enterprising spirit of the Paskal Family
- This partnership continues the long tradition of our families working closely together
- We have feedlots and farmland in the areas of Picture Butte, Iron Springs and Enchant, Alberta in addition to farm land near Outlook, SK
- Fun Fact: In 2015, we set up a cancer walk and encouraged members of our community to raise funds for cancer research by walking over 15 km. 500 people showed up and walked on a very hot day raising funds to support cancer.
- Fun Fact: There is passion for baseball in our company that led to the creation of a feedlot league between the Van Raay's and Paskal's. Now we are all on the same team!! Other local feedlots have joined in on the fun and participate in a competitive baseball feedlot league.

“The world is always changing but one thing doesn’t change - our commitment to abide by our core values such as; compassion for animals, setting a higher standard, doing what we say we will do, details matter, willingness to change, willingness to adapt, responsibly manage our land and the surrounding environment and integrity always.”

Why did you participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

Because we have a commitment to our cattle feeding heritage and to our future. The commitment to our family and community is what drives us forward every day. We get a feeling of self-worth knowing we are affording opportunities for the next generation and knowing we are feeding the world safe, affordable and sustainable beef.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

That we do all we can to use our experience and our integrity to guarantee - food safety, environmental compliance, animal health and animal welfare. Always strive to set the highest standards in responsible and sustainable cattle production. Taking care of our cattle above all else.

Why is a program like this important to the industry?

We felt that McDonald's Pilot offered a great deal of value to the industry in that it allowed us to participate in a program that will be win-win for consumers and farmers. The pilot program will help to build trust with consumers and better relationships with them.

Les Wall, KCL Cattle Co



Les, Lisa and family



28,000 annually fed through the feedlot



Irrigated farm land



Grazing pairs at KCL



Harvest time

- Located in Lethbridge, AB
- Les and Lisa's two daughters and family are very involved (Celia, Tanner and Isla Granberg, Karleen and Jared Clark)
- Family owns and operates two feedlots in the Coaldale/Lethbridge area where they feed 28,000 head annually
- 4,000 acres of owned and rented land
- Member of Allied Marketing Group (AMG). AMG is a peer group of 5 cattle producers in the Lethbridge/Picture Butte area
- Fun Fact: Family pastimes include hiking, backpacking, sports and running. Les, Lisa and Karleen are currently training for a half marathon

"We're proud of what we do and want our customers to feel that same pride."

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

We want to be able to provide safe, nutritious and delicious tasting beef to the consumer for many years to come. This means continuously striving for excellence in all aspects – economically, ethically, environmentally and socially.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

The newest addition to our family (7 mo. Old Isla) makes this a fourth generation cattle and farm operation and we want to be able to continue on these traditions. We have a deep love for our land and community and want to continue to see it thrive for years to come.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

We're proud of what we do and want our customers to feel that same pride. We were excited about the opportunity to bring our side of the story into the industry and display the hard work we put into our product to the consumers. We want them to see first-hand the passion and dedication that goes into producing their food.

Barry & Anne Wasko, Bar 4 Bar Land and Cattle



Anne and Barry Wasko at the ranch



Large back grounding pens



Moving cattle



Prairie grazing

- Located near Eastend, SK
- Commercial cow-calf and backgrounder
- Four generations of ranching
- Son & family ranching nearby - Travis, Jocelyn & Nash Wasko
- Abundant wildlife on the ranch co-exists with the cattle operation successfully
- Barry and Anne combined travel and business by getting married in 2013 at the NCBA convention in Florida

“I think the Pilot’s good. People should do it. It opens your eyes about how you are doing things and how to improve.”

Why is sustainable beef important to you?

I think if you aren’t sustainable, you won’t be profitable. Managing our resources helps us in dry years like 2015 where we had enough grass for the cows.

Why is sustainability important to the industry?

I think the industry is sustainable but we have to tell the story and show consumers we are sustainable and we want to do better. We are doing all these things for the all the right reasons, with food in mind.

Why did you get involved in the VSB Pilot?

I think it is good for the cattle industry to tell our story (to consumers)... it allows the ranchers to quantify the work they have done all their lives. They (McDonald’s) support us, the Canadian beef industry, by using 100% Canadian beef in their operation. Why wouldn’t we support them?

Darren & Beth Ann Breitzkreitz, Anchorbarlasyd



- Located near Fort Assiniboine, AB
- We farm 1,340 acres including grain, hay and pasture
- We breed 140 commercial cows, weaning in November, backgrounding for a couple months and sell to a feedlot which supplies the hormone and antibiotic free markets.
- We participate in the Holistic Management program and have been improving our operation thanks to the Growing Forward Program
- Managing our woodland areas and water sources are a key focus point for our operation
- Fun Fact: we also operate a wedding decorating service offering rustic country décor for local brides

“ We enjoy raising cattle, and the Pilot was a great opportunity to meet with an independent third-party to learn about our operation from a different point of view.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Raising cattle the most humane way possible with ample feed and good clean water, while continually improving the land for future generations. They have to be able to produce a calf with very little help and raise that calf with a sufficient rate of gain at weaning time. By managing herd health, we can keep our costs down so that we’re able to make a profit otherwise there is no reason to continue.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

We enjoy raising cattle, but they have to support our operation. In order for that to happen they have to be sustainable.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

It gives us the opportunity to sit down with a third-party to assess the way we raise our cattle, finding areas where we could improve. We also believe that cattle producers have to get more involved in educating the consumer that we raise our cattle the best way possible in our climate.

Morgan Chattaway, Bar S Ranch



- Located in Nanton, AB
- Cow-calf yearling operation operating on approximately 24,000 acres
- This year we are calving nearly 1,100 cows, grassing 1,00 steers and raising 400 replacements
- The ranch is run by three brothers, their father and one nephew
- We've been part of VBP for 8 years and saw the Pilot as a great extension of that program
- Fun Fact – Fifth generation ranch

“Sustainable beef is important to us because we hope it will help educate the public about how well we love our animals and the land we share.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Having an operation that is raising healthy, high quality animals that not only perform well for us, but for the next owner. It means teaching good work ethics to the next generation or anyone working with us.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

It's important to us because we hope it will help educate the public about how well we love our animals and the land we share.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

It was a good step forward in getting the message out about the way we operate our ranch. The more we promote and educate the better.

Murray & Dawn Giles, MRG Land and Cattle



Jodi, Dawn, Murray, Jessica and Kayla



Stubble grazing this past winter



Calving time



Jessica showing her 4-H market steer



Winter feeding

- Located in Cayley, AB
- 120 Simmental Angus cross cattle and a diverse grain farm
- Farm with their three daughters Kayla, Jessica and Jodi
- Active members of Longview 4-H Beef Club with 10 years of involvement and support
- Fun Fact: Our whole family loves to water ski!

“For us, sustainable beef means creating a sure future for the beef industry in Alberta.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Creating a sure future for the beef industry in Alberta. We strive to find a balance between being environmental stewards and producing the highest quality beef we can in an efficient way. We keep our doors open to the public and strive to continuously educate others about agriculture and beef production.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

Because we always strive to be proactive in our farming practices. Being land stewards is one of our main priorities and we take the best care of our animals as we possibly can. We want to show others that we are making a safe and sustainable product.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

We wanted to take action in order to show others that we are doing our part. The Pilot didn’t make us change anything, it works to reinforce that we’re on the right track. Now we have an actual verification to show people that backs up what we say about our care for the land and cattle.

Betty Green, G7 Ranch



Robert and Betty Green



A look at the feedlot from the sky



The next generation is strong and growing quick



Replacement heifers at G7 Ranch

- Located in Fisher Branch, MB
- 600 cow-calf operation with a small full-blood Simmental heard and a backgrounding feedlot
- The ranch is managed and operated by three generations of the Green family
- We produce forages and corn silage for our winter feed supplies
- 9 grandsons and 2 granddaughters that love the newborn calves as much as we do
- Fun Fact – In 1982, we agreed not to calve out more than 100 cows each year. Within 25 years we were calving out 1,000 cows

“It’s a privilege and a passion of ours to work on the land with animals while producing wholesome, Canadian food.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Producing top quality beef for our worldwide consumers in a way that ensures we are enriching the environment to ensure continuous improvements in our production system.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

Because that is what will guarantee a future in the industry for our children and grandchildren. It’s a privilege and our passion to work on the land and with animals while producing wholesome food. There is an important responsibility that goes along with that gift, the responsibility to care for the assets, land and water that we all rely on.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

We believe in agriculture advocacy. We know that we can’t reach all consumers to understand their needs and interests, or to share our story. We believe in this opportunity to contribute to the great story McDonald’s has in purchasing 100% Canadian beef.

Garth Porteous, Laidlaw Ranching Co.



Garth, Karla, Kiara, Landon, Kale and Makaya Porteous



Maureen and Bob Laidlaw



Wes and Lydia Laidlaw



A regular day in the Laidlaw finishing feedlot



- Located near Bow Island, AB
- Deep heritage in the agriculture sector
- Four generation family business that operates a ranch and feedlot along the South Saskatchewan River
- Operate Laidlaw Sand & Gravel providing aggregate and trucking to southern Alberta
- Very involved in 4-H as both members and leaders
- Garth stays current on industry trends as a director on the local feeder association and as a delegate on Alberta Beef Producers
- Fun Fact: We are very involved in our children’s activities. In 2010, Garth competed and won Gold for Canada in Point Sparring at the World Martial Arts Games in Las Vegas

“Our heritage comes from the grass roots agricultural sector, and we want to continue this way of life.”

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Ensuring the longevity of our operation, doing what we do to the best of our ability, to provide this way of life for future generations.

Why is sustainable beef important to your family/operation?

Our heritage comes from the grass roots agricultural sector, and we want to continue this way of life. Our goal is to inspire our children to take the lead in the industry, raising their family in a lifestyle that farming and ranching provides.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

We want to be involved so we can stay on the leading edge of the industry. Our operation must stay current in production and social trends, by continually advancing and using the best operating standards available. We are proud to be a part of this process by helping build the present and future of the beef industry.

Harold & Ramona Blyth, Rosehill Cattle Co.



- Located near MacGregor, MB
- Mixed family farm operation with 350 cow-calf pairs that retains heifers for replacement
- Grow grain and oilseeds as part of the operation. Own over 4,000 acres and rent an additional 1,000 acres
- Involved with the environmental farm plan and are a verified beef operation through the VBP plus program
- Harold loves watching the new calves each spring from the time they are born to them playing around out in the pastures. He loves watching the cattle grazing. It's one of his great pride and joys!
- Fun Fact: Ramona calls Harold the "Minister of Defense" because he is so fussy about the quality of his fence building that he deserves that title

"We felt the Pilot was a viable program to be involved in and in order for our industry to stay up to date with the customers, we need to stay in the forefront of the industry with this Pilot"

Why is sustainable beef important to you and your family?

We are a three generation family farm with the fourth generation up and coming, and we want it to be the very best it can be. It's our livelihood!!!! It's our legacy!!!

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

That you are a good steward of the land, good manager of your livestock and take great pride in your operation to be the very best it can be while being profitable.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

We felt it's a viable program to be involved in and in order for our industry to stay up to date with the customers we need to stay in the fore front of the industry, with this pilot program that is a step in the right direction.

Brad & Pat Rooke, Rooke Land & Cattle Ranch

Cal & Catherine Rooke, Rebel Creek Angus



- Located near Pollockville, AB
- 4th generation family business in the heart of hard grass country in special areas #2
- The Rooke family combines their family heritage and experience to run 400 head of Angus cattle and 125 head of purebred Red Angus on their two operations
- Our motto is “Your most accurate bull decision” providing HD50K, GE-EPDs, ultrasound carcass data on every bull
- Cal enjoys playing several musical instruments and Catherine teaches dance and figure skating in several communities
- Fun Fact: Brad’s grandpa, having developed miner’s lung, was advised to move to a dry climate. So he moved and settled in Pollockville where the ranch is today.

“The future of the beef industry is to produce sustainable and ethical beef. Thanks to McDonald’s for giving our industry the opportunity to showcase agriculture and support our way of life.”

Why is sustainable beef important to you and your family?
We need to be accountable to ourselves and the public that we are raising our beef in an ethical and practical manner. Although we always have done this, it’s time to show others we are doing just that.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?
Cattle are raised in a safe, healthy and humane environment. Providing feed, water and shelter to our cattle and handling them in a low stress manner while using genetic information to improve the quality and efficiency of the herd.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?
The future of the beef industry is to provide sustainable and ethical beef and doing so will result in moral and financial satisfaction.

Doug & Deb Skeels, Cattlegrass Ranch



Doug and Deb Skeels with some of the herd



Calves nearly ready for backgrounding



Dinner time at the hay rack



Pairs grazing in the fall

- Located near Rocky Mountain House, AB
- 3rd generation ranch looking forward to teaching the 4th generation the love of caring for land and animals
- 50 pair commercial cow-calf operation backgrounding calves in the fall and managing 3 quarters, mostly in grass
- Fun Fact: We love to continuously learn about the all aspects of raising our animals. We attend many conferences to learn about grasslands management, animal health and behavior, carbon capture, water management and many more!

“The health of the land, cattle and wildlife are all important to us. When we take care of those, we create sustainable beef.”

Why is sustainable beef important to you and your family?

To be sustainable all aspects must benefit. The health and comfort of our livestock is important to us. The health of the land contributes to the health of the domestic animals as well as the natural wildlife.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

Providing a high quality product while maintaining or improving the health of land, livestock and water.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald's Pilot?

The 3rd party verification helps us in improving how we do things. An outsider can look at our operation and provide us with insights we may not of thought of.

Gerald Vandervalk, V XV Farms



Joel, Ryan, Danielle, Patricia,
Nathan and Gerald



Supplemental feeding



An honor to receive this award



Tagging calves safely



Jack and Merry feeding

- Located near Claresholm, AB
- Three generations working together to improve the ranch every day
- Ranching in the Porcupine Hills west of Claresholm
- Seed stock providers for Beefbooster Inc.
- Constantly learning better ways to manage grazing for all seasons
- Fun Fact: The family enjoys hobbies such as snorkeling, travel, music and sports

“Our goal is to have a business that is sustainable long-term and to provide an opportunity for future generations.”

Why is sustainable beef important to you and your family?

It’s amazing to see technology and new products have allowed for great improvements in managing the ranch. We’re striving to make things easier so there is less stress on livestock, handlers and the environment.

What does sustainable beef mean to you?

We run our operation with a goal to improve our range condition and genetics of our livestock. Our goal is to have a business that is sustainable long-term and to provide an opportunity for future generations.

Why did you choose to participate in the McDonald’s Pilot?

The disconnect between rural and urban life has increased over the years and we feel that it’s important to increase awareness of what we do on the ranch. We commend McDonald’s for stepping out and trying to get the right message to their consumers as to where their food comes from, and how it is raised. The Pilot has also given us as producers a vehicle to review our operations and see where improvements could and should be made.