

Goodland grad honored at job

Editor's Note: The following article was printed in Grass & Grain, Aug. 10. By Miranda Reiman, Industry Information Specialist.

Rachel Smith, a 1997 Goodland High School graduate, is a good hand around a feedyard. She can wash tanks and work in the mill. She knows how to doctor cattle, process arrivals and read bunks.

She puts all that experience to work at Thomas County Feeders, near Colby, where her actual position is full-time cattle clerk. That means she handles all of the "natural" paperwork, and deals in customer service, too.

Although she spends most of her time in the office nowadays, Smith started out doing pretty much every job in the feeding industry, and she still reads bunks once or twice a week. That's a rare skill for most cattle clerks.

Dedication to detail usually comes with the job description, but Smith goes above and beyond, perhaps because she sees a bigger purpose in her everyday work.

"It's fun talking to guys with cattle from California to Florida and hearing the differences, but we are all trying to get to the same goal," says Smith, a Goodland, Kan., native. "We are able to give them their data back and answer their questions. We help them improve their herd and it helps us all make a profit."

It's that commitment to the Certified Angus Beef LLC core philosophy, along with an exceptional work record, that earned the title, 2010 Quality Assurance Officer of the Year. The award, which dates back

to 2000, is chosen from employees among nearly 70 Certified Angus Beef-licensed yards nationwide.

Smith's enthusiasm is infectious, but it's the combination of optimism and get-down-to-business that makes her extremely effective and efficient, says former manager Mike Hunter.

"She is happy-go-lucky, but when it comes to her paperwork, she is serious," he says.

That became an increasingly important part of Smith's role after the yard switched to 100 percent natural production in 2006. As cattle enter the yard, she checks their affidavits and tracks down any missing information with the producer.

"We are really good about making sure everything is signed daily and filled in as we do it," Smith says. "We want the buyers to see it takes a lot of extra work, but we're doing it to provide the best beef we can."

Everything is kept in order with color-coded files, lists and lots of double-checking — a system that has passed every U.S. Department of Agriculture audit to date.

The yard foreman enrolls cattle in the certified program, but Smith takes it from there. She requests packing-plant data and sends pen closeouts to the Manhattan, Kan., office within days of shipping.

"I hate waiting on paperwork, so I hate making people wait for me," she says.

Although Smith seems like a natural fit for her current position, she didn't plan a career in the beef industry. Her first livestock experience came from her grandmother's



Rachel Smith stood in front a pen of cattle at Thomas County Feeders. She is the cattle clerk for the feedyard.

farm and 4-H. Then she went to Panhandle State University in Guymon, Okla., for agronomy and got a job at nearby Texas County Feedyard.

"I started in the office there and asked to try some of the other spots," says Smith. So she was moved from processing to the vet barn to the mill and driving a feed truck. "I kind of fell in love with the beef industry because it wasn't the same thing every day," she says.

The Oklahoma experience made

life easier when she moved north. "I can understand where the cowboys are coming from when they talk about the animals and where the mill guys are coming from on the feed," Smith says.

She's been at Thomas County for nine years.

"You can't have changeover in a position like hers," Hunter says. "Consistency is the key, and you can't train somebody to do everything Rachel does."

"She's not a clock watching person," he continues. "She is here when she needs to be and doesn't leave until she's done."

That typically means coming in at 7 a.m. and posting feed and vet charges from the day before — unless it's those days she's reading bunks, when her day will start even earlier. After that Smith sorts through harvest data, matches it up with closeouts, fields customer questions, and keeps up on all the

other details.

"I always love learning, so I'm talking to these guys and I learn a little bit more every day," she says. "If you stop learning, you stop growing."

That's just one more example of the attitude that makes Smith a walking definition of "good help," and a truly great guardian of quality for her yard and the Certified Angus Beef program.

Weed problems cause change in mowing strategy

By Tom Betz

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Keeping up with the growing weeds has become a problem, and the commissioners and mowing contractor agreed to change the strategy over the next month to mow the corners and delay the second general mowing.

Darrel Schroeder, mowing contractor, met with the commissioners on Tuesday to talk about the weed mowing program. He said he is starting the second round of mowing on old U.S. 24 because of the upcoming chip sealing project.

Commissioner Max Linin said when Schrader mowed the weeds were waist high again.

"We have to do something," he said. "We will have to extend the contract or we will be mowing three times."

Commissioner Chuck Thomas said Schrader can't stop, but I can't see what it is going to do if we keep mowing.

He asked Schrader for his opinion on what the county ought to do.

"I know you are on a limited budget," Schrader said, "for this year if you could find the money I would

spray it and then follow it with a mowing. What is worrying me is the school buses and the corners."

Linin said he was not sure the chemicals will do much at this time.

Thomas said they have about 30 days before the second mowing will do any good.

Linin asked Schrader if they could use the disc mower around the county.

Schrader said it would probably take a month and a half.

"How long would we need to wait to cut the weeds with the rotarys to

have a good cut," Linin asked.

Schrader said it would take about four months to do the whole county.

Commissioner Cynthia Strnad suggested stopping the mowing of the ditches and have Schrader cut the intersection corners to improve line of sight.

The commissioners agreed that sounded like a good plan and told Schrader that once he was done mowing old U.S. 24 he should concentrate on the intersections and use the bar on the worst spots and delay the second mowing.

The commissioners said that might mean the mowing would go beyond the contract date, but they would not penalize him for that.

Thomas said for next year they may change the first mowing until later or just have one mowing.

Schrader said getting help is a problem, and trying to keep four mowers going is getting tough.

Strnad said it should not matter how many mowers are used as long as it was done in the needed time.

Thomas suggested running two disc mowers, but it might not look as nice.

Schrader said he felt people have gotten spoiled.

"When we had a lot of money we did extra things," Strnad said. "With less money we have to adjust as we do in our lives."

Thomas said it would be good to put the full amount in for mowing next year to give the county some flexibility in how to handle the ditches.

matters of record

District Traffic

The following fines have been paid in the Sherman County District Court.

June 27: Thomas M. Pollock, Jr., speeding, \$174.50.
Matthew L. Miller, unlawful parking, \$228.50.

Clay A. Hudson, speeding, \$171.50.

June 28: Chad P. Brucken, speeding, \$153.50.

Heather K. Chandler, no seat belt, \$5.00.

Ronald W. Hudson, unlawful parking, \$153.00.

Thomas C. Coussens, gross weight registration violation, \$118.50.

June 29: Luis Luna, speeding, \$228.50.

Eaton J. Rigg, speeding, \$183.50.

June 30: Susan D. MacDonald, speeding, \$180.50.

Derryl L. Reed, fail to yield to

emergency vehicle, \$273.50.

July 1: Troys J. Albers, no seat belt, \$5.00

Dawson F. Brenner, no seat belt, \$60.

Andrew Ostmeyer, no seat belt, \$5.00.

Stephen R. McNeil, speeding, \$180.50.

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