

2007 Awards of Excellence

The nominee winner of the 2007 Industry Service Award goes to Wilson Equipment.

Wilson Equipment Company is a 59 year-old family run business in Spartanburg County South Carolina. They have been a major distributor of John Deere Equipment and still are. In 2003 the Kubota line of agriculture equipment was added to compliment the John Deere equipment. Phil and Al Wilson, with plenty of help from the founder, Jay Wilson, handle the day-to-day operations. Wilson Equipment Company now specializes in consumer grounds care equipment and atv's plus the major farm equipment tractors. They have all equipment for the agriculture producers for the area. They service their products and carry a large supply of parts for John Deere and Kubota. Call today for parts or service, a new tractor, lawn tractors or all terrain-vehicles.

Wilson Equipment Company has supported and been a member of The Spartanburg County Livestock Producers' Association for many-many years and has supported the association by hosting and sponsoring meetings, mostly during the month of February. They have done the same for 4-H projects in Spartanburg County as needed or requested. Two years ago in 2006, when SCLPA did the second capital fund raiser for the scholarship capital fund, who they went to, but Wilson Equipment for their help in providing a John Deere 100 Series Model 115 Mower for the drawing. The same has been done again for 2008.

The Nominee winner for Associate of the Year goes to Mrs. Rebecca Harper.

Mrs. Rebecca Harper is the District Conservationist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service in Marion County. In FY2007, Rebecca funded 14 livestock-related contracts under EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) that totaled approximately \$242,000 in cost share assistance to Marion County producers. These 14 contracts covered approximately 1000 acres of pastureland and consisted of practices such as fencing, wells, pipeline, water facilities, heavy use areas, pasture planting, livestock shade structures and livestock watering ponds.

Livestock practices like these are used to treat resource concerns such as: inadequate water for livestock, inadequate quantities and quality of feed and forage, animal stress and mortality, soil erosion concerns and excessive nutrients and organics in surface and groundwater; just to name a few.

The Nominee Winner for Purebred Cattleman of the Year is Mr. Brad Forrest.

Brad Forrest is a third generation purebred beef cattle producer. This fine man and outstanding cattleman provides the day to day management of the longest continuous operating purebred beef cattle operation in Saluda County. The Forrest Family has been in the business of providing quality Polled Hereford breeding stock for 66 years.

In 1973, Brad graduated from Newberry College and that same year married Lynette Black. In 1974, he joined as a partner in Forrest Polled Herefords and C.B. Forrest and Son Store.

He has been responsible for many improvements in the genetics and management of the beef cattle operation. Brad Forrest was one of the first beef producers in Saluda County to implement an Artificial Insemination breeding program. He also was one of the first in the State to utilize Embryo Transfer to improve herd genetics.

Brad has been very interested in improving carcass traits in the herd. Bulls and females are now ultrasounded to obtain carcass data. Forrest Polled Hereford steers have been sent to feedlots in Iowa for a number of years. Carcass data has also been obtained when these steers were slaughtered.

A most successful on-farm production sale has been held since 1990 on an every other year basis with partner White Columns Farm. Tennessee River Music Polled Herefords of Ft. Paine, Alabama purchased a Forrest Polled Hereford heifer in this sale several years back and then this same animal sold again for the sum of \$50,000.

Bulls and females from the registered herd are sold private treaty and are also marketed through consignment sales throughout the Southeast.

Polled Hereford females are made available by Forrest Polled Herefords for the Agriculture and FFA program at Saluda High School.

In addition to the registered herd, a high quality commercial herd has been developed in recent years.

Brad Forrest is also a good grassland farmer and has implemented many new profitable practices with his pastures and hay fields. Brad was one of the first in the area to utilize electric fencing and rotational grazing. He also has made new plantings of Max Q fescue and has introduced clovers into his pastures. He makes extensive plantings of ryegrass for grazing and hay.

Brad Forrest is a great cattleman and business man but he is also a great community leader, church leader and family man.

The nominee winner for the 2007 Young Cattlemen of the Year goes to Mr. Cody Bright.

Cody Bright is a young 31 year old South Carolina native. He attended Clemson University and graduated with a degree in Animal Science and Economics. At the early age of 12 he started helping haul hay for a neighbor's cattle and has not gotten away from the business since.

After college he worked at JAC's Ranch in Arkansas owned by the Shumaker family. He stayed there for 6 years when he was approached by Bill Sarratt to come back to the upstate. At first he was a little unsure of leaving and starting out on a basically new operation. Along with Mr. Sarratt's relentless pursuit and Cody's mother's wish for him to move back closer to home; Cody finally agreed to the career change.

Cody's first action was to cull the herd at Sarratts and what stayed became the base for the donor herd. Several outstanding feeders were obtained from well know herds in the state. The Sarratt Farm had two (2) bulls in the top 5 selling bulls at the 2007 Edisto Forage Bull Sale Test this past October.

Cody has done extensive A. I. work within the herd to improve blood lines and genetics. Now the major aspect is on Embryo Transplants and expanding the registered herd number. He is a strong believer of customer satisfaction.

The nominee precipitate winner for Commercial Cattlemen of the year is Mr. Don Atkinson.

Atkinson Cattle Company is owned and operated by Don Atkinson, a third generation cattleman, and his wife Sherry and sons, DC, Dakota, and Dustin. Don and Sherry reside in the family home place that was built in 1896 and is located in Marion County, South Carolina.

Atkinson Cattle Company consists of 250 commercial brood cows, all sired by Cow Creek Ranch Brangus genetics since 1991. Don started with his first Brangus bull in 1990 from Graham Dubose to be used on mixed commercial cows. Since this early beginning Atkinson has concentrated on growing the right kind of replacement heifers for his area of the state.

Don sells his steers in truck load loads. He strives to raise uniform steers and follows a strict herd health protocol. In 2007, he started source and age verifying his steers. Atkinson believes in getting the most premiums he can get for his cattle.

The unique part of this family cattle operation is Atkinson has no hired labor. All work is done by him and his wife. Atkinson has a custom hay operation, in addition to the cattle, cutting approximately 350 acres of coastal Bermuda.

Mr. Atkinson serves as the 2008 President of the Pee Dee Cattlemen's Association, board member of the South Carolina Cattlemen's Association, and NCBA.

The Nominee winner for Educator of the Year is Mr. Lee Van Vlake.

Lee Van Vlake is a new member of the Clemson University Extension Livestock and Forage State Program Team and a committed member since he was hired in May of 2006. His region currently includes ten counties in the Pee Dee Region. This is a major undertaking to work with producers in such a large area.

While serving on one of the subcommittees- Lee Van Vlake and Matt Burns planned, developed, coordinated and implemented the 1st Annual Cattlemen's Day in conjunction with the Clemson and SCCA Bull Sale. Seventy five producers attended this event.

He has assisted with many youth events including various beef shows at the SC State Fair, livestock shows at the Eastern Carolina Agricultural Fair, Jr. Beef Round-Up, and judging the Laurens County Beef Show. Lee served as a member of the Livestock Team at the Eastern Carolina Agricultural Fair in Florence. As a team member he helped plan, coordinate and implement many of the Livestock and Youth Events. He served as an active member of the Jr. Beef Round-Up Committee. He assisted with various breed shows and various scholarship contests during the Jr. Beef Round-up.

Van Vlakte is an active member of the Pee Dee Cattlemen's Association. He assists the association in planning and implementing cutting edge programs for the cattlemen in the Pee Dee Region. These meetings included such topics as marketing truck load lots directly from the farm and group sales (Tri-County sale) and Drought Management. He has been instrumental in coordinating a Southeastern Beef Cattle Marketing School to be held in Marion, SC for all Pee Dee Beef Cattle Producers.

He also conducted an additional drought management meeting in Conway, SC. Working with the Horry County Ag Agent and Dow AgroSciences, Lee was able to put in a pasture weed trial.

The nominee winner for the Environmental Stewardship award goes to Mr. Gene Driggers.

A cattleman located in the upper part of Dillon County, South Carolina. This Mr. Driggers bought an old farm and moved from Lexington, SC to the Pee Dee area in 1998 bringing with him a few red cows. The farm was very wet and took a good bit of ditching and cleaning up before it was dry enough to grow grass. He then started fencing and cross fencing in order to set up an intensive grazing system. Today the farm consists of 383 owned acres with another 135 acres rented in Robeson County, NC where all the hay for the herd is produced. Today the farm is home to 102 black baldies that graze 75 acres of established coastal bermuda grass and 90 acres of pearl millet. Rye is no-tilled over the bermuda and row crop land for winter grazing. This gentleman also has his farm enrolled in the EQIP program. In 2007, he installed additional cross fencing breaking the pastures again into smaller cells, added eleven frost proof energy free waterers using geo-textile fabric and rock at these heavy use areas. Over the next year another 75 acres will be fenced and cross-fenced with energy free frost proof waterers installed in each cell. All waterways and wetland will be fenced out thus completing all fencing on the Dillon farm. Along with cattle he also manages 145 acres of timberland on the farm using established conservation practices to attract and encourage wildlife.

The Nominee Winner for Association of the Year goes to Pickens County.

The Pickens County Cattlemen's Association is a very proactive association that continues to address member needs in a number of means by: publishing an annual directory, and quarterly newsletters.

The Pickens County Cattlemen's Association is continuing to change in order to administer to our cattlemen and the cattle industry. Some of these changes include:

A Junior program – The PCCA has started a juniors only program that is geared for the younger members. With the farm population growing older, the juniors are the future of the cattle industry.

Also, held in Dec. was the SC Farm & Ranch EXPO – The PCCA partnered with the Clemson Extension Service to host the SC Farm & Ranch EXPO at the T. Ed Garrison arena complex in Clemson, SC. A Jail & Bail was held during the EXPO and \$1000 was raised and donated to the National Cattlemen's Foundation of the NCBA and to the Therapeutic Riding program of the American Quarter Horse Association.

In summary, the Pickens County Cattlemen's Association supports the SCCA and the cattle industry by addressing the needs of our members. Informative meetings, newsletters, directories, and special seminars serve the needs of our membership. Junior meetings address the need to support the future of

the cattle business. The PCCA continues to change in the changing cattle industry. We will not accept sitting still – only change is constant.