

# Producer Stories

Horse V Ranch  
Taylorsville, California

2009

## From Upper Feather River Watershed Farmers & Ranchers

**Brian and Heather Kingdon** purchased the main ranch in Indian Valley in 1991. Since then progressive practices have been implemented on the 385 acres of irrigated ground. It is used primarily for summer grazing and hay production. Included in the operation are leases on two summer ranches as well as the winter range near Chico. This provides year round grazing for their herd of predominately Angus cattle which was started from a base herd of Beefmaster many years ago.



In the spring of 1986, Brian attended a workshop by Alan Savory, founder of the holistic management philosophy. The new ideas presented at the workshop has given Brain a different view of 'all' things. He liked the idea that the "whole picture" needs to be incorporated in order for any of the business to work effectively. Cattle become a tool to produce better soil which in turn produces better grass.

### *Management Highlights*

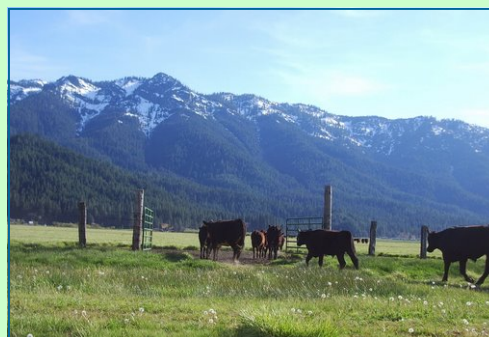
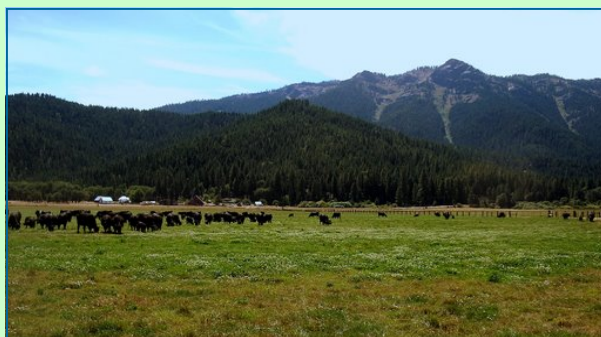
- ◆ Engineering a gravity flow irrigation system with a buried 12" mainline on 2/3 of the ranch.
- ◆ Leveling fields to maximize water dispersal.
- ◆ Building an 80x80ft. Pole Barn.
- ◆ Replacing 2/3 of the perimeter fences.
- ◆ Installing cross fencing to manage grazing and irrigation rotation.
- ◆ Manage herd for 65 day calving season



*"The 'whole picture' has to be incorporated for any business to work effectively"*



As a fifth generation rancher in Indian Valley, Brian's knowledge of the valley and its production capabilities is vast. Ranching for Brian and Heather encompasses everything: the water, the grass, the ducks, the trees, the seasons, the grandparents, the children, and the community. In order for the operation to run smoothly there has to be a balance, a blend, of all these things.



University of California Cooperative Extension (<http://ucanr.org/waterquality>)

Upper Feather River Watershed Group (<http://www.ufrwg.org>)

Partial Funding: SWRCB Prop. 50 Project

# Adopting a Holistic Management Approach

*“Sustainable has become a buzz word, but when managed properly the land will produce continually.”*

With the **holistic management** approach, each element of the operation affects and enhances the production of the other elements.

The **soil** is the basis for all that is done; it grows all the cows and calves, as well as the hay. Over the past ten years, several fields have been plowed, leveled and planted to permanent pasture, with the plan of eventually completing this practice on all the ranch pasture lands.

To conserve **water**, 2500 ft. of underground mainline has been installed each year for the past four years. This has doubled the forage production. The goal over the next several years is to have the entire ranch irrigation system supplied by the buried mainline and do away with ditches and ditch sheets. Conserving water is a must and this system has increased the area which can be irrigated and the ability to get water on and off the fields rapidly.

The **cattle** are predominantly Angus; starting from a base herd of Beefmaster, many years ago. Calving starts the first of June and continues through a 65 day calving season. The shortened calving season enables the Kingdons to offer a uniform set of calves to buyers. The calves from each prior year, are shipped home, weaned, pastured and sold on the video markets in July. Low stress handling is used, so the cattle are gentle and easy to handle. The rotational grazing system has also increased handling ease. The cattle are eager to go to the lane and by the corrals for shipping and handling, since this routine is done with most of the pasture rotations. The cows are accustomed to being worked with Border Collie dogs, horses, four wheelers or on foot. And, a lot of time is spent just observing the cattle as part of the overall health, feed and calving programs.



Recently “sustainable” has become a buzz word, but Brian and Heather have long felt that ranching and farming are two of the few businesses that can *grow* an income and when managed properly the land will produce continually.



Because of the need for flexibility and the desire to operate independently, Brian has chosen to not use any government assistance for his accomplishments.

Brian and Heather, with the help of family and friends, and their hard working dogs, have done all the improvements on the ranches under their care without going into debt. Heather credits the grandparents’ stories of the depression for having a big impact on their management decisions.



## Future Plans

- ◆ Stay in Business. . . Sustain.
- ◆ Research carbon sequestering.
- ◆ Fence wildlife habitat areas at the end of each irrigated field.
- ◆ Install more cross fences and water troughs to further improve grazing management.
- ◆ Plant grain crop for livestock feed.
- ◆ Plant large garden for extended family.
- ◆ Hang new metal gates for the wife!



*“The cattle are accustomed to being worked with Border Collies.”*

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