

# Faith, Family & Rodeo Thrive On Western South Dakota Ranch

BY LURA ROTI  
for South Dakota  
Farmers Union

When Pat Clark, 52, reflects on his life and career as a third-generation South Dakota rancher, he looks upward and gives thanks.

"I thank the Lord for the opportunity to ranch. He's been good to us and if it was not for Him, we wouldn't be here." "When you talk about getting through the tough times - God is a key player,"



adds Barb, Pat's wife and ranching partner of 27 years.

In 1986, Pat met Barb, who grew up on a farm/ranch operation near Meadow.

The couple married in 1988 and have been ranching together ever since. In

2000 they purchased the ranch from Pat's dad, James.

Together the couple and their four children have

worked hard to make their cattle herd and land more productive. "We sell beef but we are really selling grass. We want to sell more pounds of beef per acre of grass," Pat explains.

Since they took over ownership, they have installed water pipelines, cross fences and implemented a rotational grazing program.

"It's changed quite a bit. The ranch was pretty Owestern' with big open-

workshops whenever they can - Barb says the biggest changes were driven by the 2002 drought. It was so dry that summer, Black Horse Creek, which runs through their property, ran dry and the water that was in their dams was not potable. "We had no hay so it was nip and tuck for a while. In the end we had to sell down our herd," she says. "We realized the longer we could graze the rangeland, the less dependent on hay we could

be." They continue to install cross fence, drill wells and pipeline with assistance from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP). "It's truly a work in progress," Barb explains.

Today their graze-half/leave-half program allows for a reserve of grass. During the 2012 drought, the Clarks were able to maintain their herd size.

Along with changing the rangeland esthetics, due to modifying their herd's genetics, the cattle also look different today. "Big cows take more grass and

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# Hay Country Jamboree At Gayville Saturday



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Iowa's "Singing Farmer" Ervin Pickhinke, shown, joins cowboy poet Ed Nesselhuf, Yankton duo Mike and Jay, and banjo wizard Dan Kilbride in "The Hay Country Jamboree," at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5, at Gayville Hall.

Gayville Hall presents its monthly musical variety show, "The Hay Country Jamboree," at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5, in Gayville.

Jamboree regulars, including banjo player and funnyman Dan Kilbride and Iowa's "Singing Farmer" Ervin Pickhinke, will be joined by award-winning cowboy poet Ed Nesselhuf of rural Elk Point, who will share some of his verses and emcee, and the popular Yankton duo, Mike Hilson and Jay Gilbertson, for a lively two-hour show.

Jamborees always feature three-or-more musical acts on stage together trading old-time popular tunes, country, bluegrass, and humor by turn. The fast-paced shows include a short intermission midway and are presented in an alcohol-free, family-friendly setting.

Gayville Hall is at 502 Washington Street in Gayville. Call (605) 267-2859 for ticket information.

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Doris Brown

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