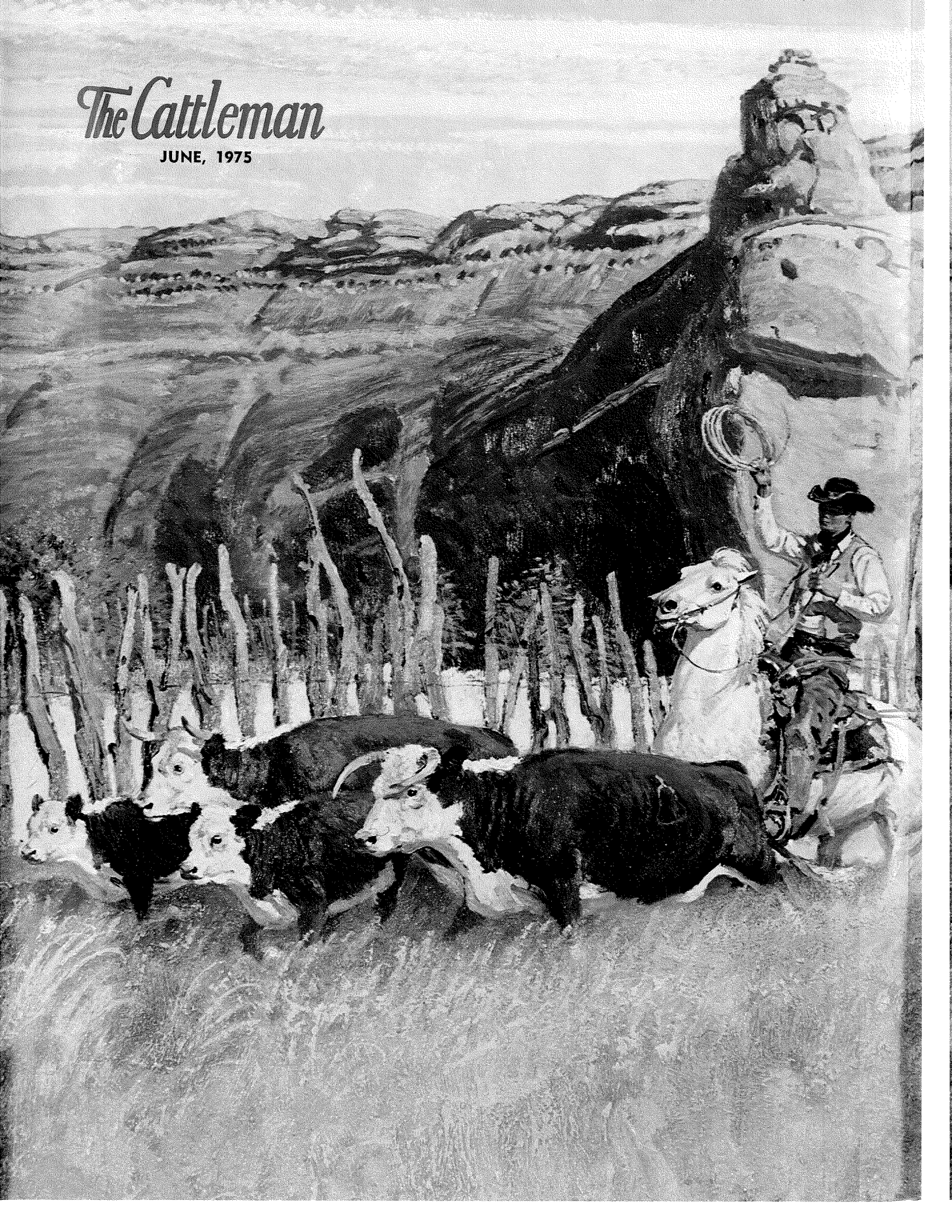


The Cattleman

JUNE, 1975



Turning 'em Black

By Alan Dale Brown



A group of mother cows raised on the Wilson Ranch.

WITH HELP FROM some good Angus bulls, Scotty and Bitsy Wilson say they are going to take their crossbred cows and "turn 'em black." In the past few years, and especially within the last few months, market conditions and feed prices have convinced them that stocker and feeder people can do the most efficient job with a $\frac{1}{4}$ Brahman / $\frac{3}{4}$ Angus calf. This works out real well for Scotty since one of the best doing cows for this East Texas country around Troup is a crossbred Angus cow.

"I like to send 'em a good black calf without any hump and with some ear," says Scotty. "They come off our place, go to the wheat fields, and into the feedlot for a short feed period and come out in less time with less sickness or death loss than anything else I know of."

Scotty is still in the process of converting his herd of mother cows to the kind that will produce what he likes to call "a number one Okie with ears." And if he happens to come on to what looks like a good buy on some quality females, he'll buy them and "put the black on the calves" after they get to his place.

"That's one thing about an Angus bull," he says, "they'll sure put the black on anything they get to and they get to just about everything."

Through the years, Scotty and Bitsy have done a little bit of everything from dairying to custom farming while trying to build up the number of mother cows to the several hundred head they presently run. The four Wilson children, Sally, 18, Melinda, 12, Hays, 11, and Ross, 6, have always helped with the family operation.

When he was just a boy, Scotty's father deeded him 114 acres of brush-covered land and gave him 13 head of cows — one for every year of Scotty's age. Through high school Scotty lived at home and with lots of help and advice from his father, he worked at cleaning up his land and build-

ing his herd. By the time he got out of high school, Scotty had cleared all the brush and stumps by hand in addition to increasing his herd of mother cows to some 50 head.

"I was a real operator," Scotty grins, "I had a horse, a dog, the land and the cows. I didn't have a pickup or any other equipment but I had a good Dad who loaned me anything I needed along with hours and hours of his time. If it hadn't have been him taking care of my cattle during the time I spent in the service, the cattle would have been sold and I would have had to start over."

When Scotty got out of the service in 1958, he and his cousin went into a partnership deal on some 2,000 acres of leased land. Scotty bought half the cows at \$80 a head and provided the labor to clear and re-seed the land. Everything seemed to be coming along well for a few years until the city of Tyler condemned the land in order

to create a lake in the early 60s.

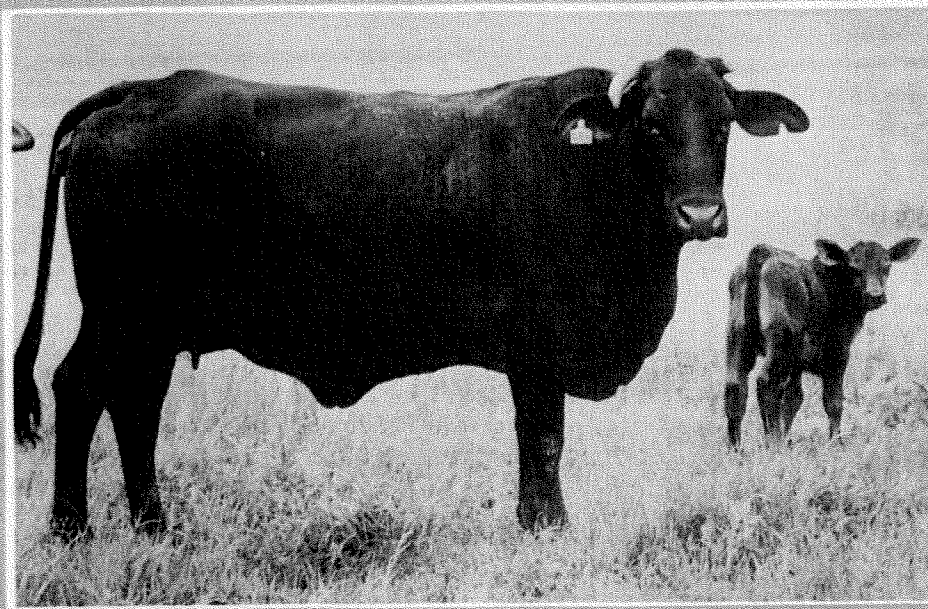
"We still didn't have any volume to speak of," says Scotty, "and that really set us back. We had to pull out of there after all that work and only got a fraction of what we had put into the land."

Not long after that a fellow came to the place to make a loan. He spotted an old dairy barn behind the house and proceeded to talk Scotty and Bitsy into starting a full-time dairy operation. "After he showed us the figures we decided to try it," Scotty says, "but I'll just tell you, I'd never milked a cow in my life unless she had a rope on both ends."

For the next six and a half years, Scotty and Bitsy milked 150 head of Holsteins. Along with solving all the normal problems involved in the operation of a dairy, Scotty and Bitsy still found time to do custom farming for their neighbors, fence building for themselves or anything else necessary to help build up their herd of



Scotty uses Jackson bulls to produce the kind of calves that he likes.



This Brangus type cow is one of the top producers that Scotty has raised.

beef cattle. "You just can't imagine the labor problems we went through with that dairy" says Bitsy. "We couldn't find anyone to help us in the first place and if we did they wouldn't stay. One time I worked for nine months to get a man over here from Scotland to help us run the dairy. I had to write letters to congressmen, senators, and just about anybody else I thought could help get him into the country. Anyway, after we got him over here, he lasted four months and went to another dairy. I tell you one thing, every once in awhile I say a little breath of thanks that we got out of the dairy business."

But the dairy business helped provide them with operating capital, a growing inventory of heavy farm equipment, and a firm belief in keeping complete records on their cattle.

It was during this time they started ear-tagging their beef cattle and keeping a notebook on the herd. "If they miss a calf these days, they've just got to go," says Scotty. "I don't care how good a cow she is."

Bitsy has always worked right alongside Scotty in all phases of their operation. "She's the top hand around here," laughs Scotty. "She used to run the baler when we were still dairying. I guarantee she could bale 1,500 to 2,000 bales in an afternoon if it were there."

"He's not telling everything," Bitsy says with a grin. "When Scotty and I first got married I was a town girl and had to learn from the bottom up. And he was used to working with his daddy, too. So they just put me up on a horse with a saddle that didn't fit and I had to learn."

Just in the last few years have Scotty

and Bitsy reached the volume in their beef cow herd which they felt that they needed. Now they are more or less concentrating on standardizing their herd to the type of cow they like, along with doing as much crossfencing as possible. Scotty likes the improved pastures of Coastal and Bahia-grass along with the clover and other native grasses on his place.

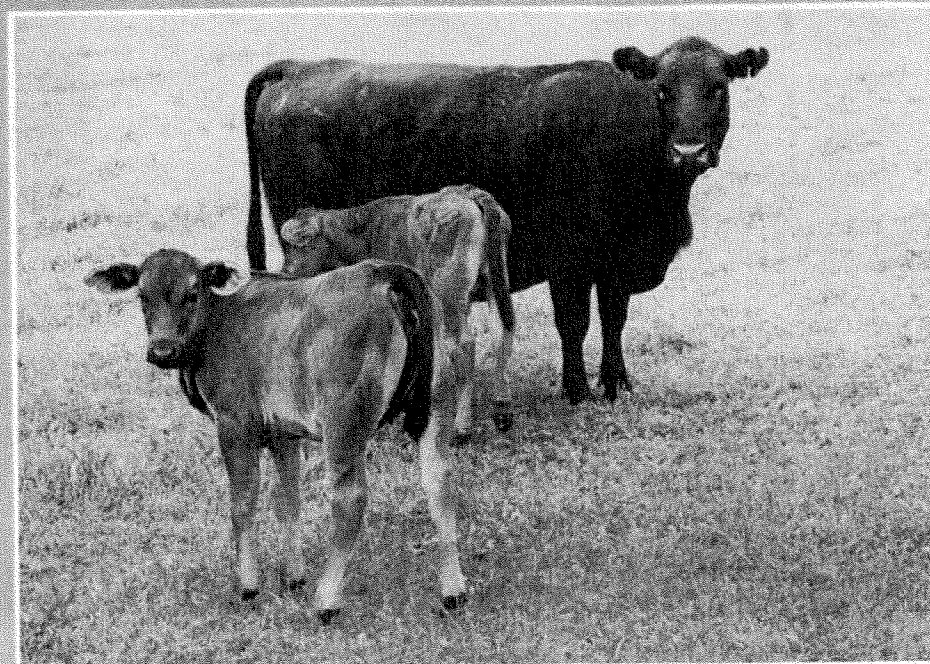
"No doubt about it," he says. "fertilizing and crossfencing is the key. Right now we're running in the neighborhood of a cow to three or four acres and cutting hay too." Scotty fertilizes at a rate of 300-400 pounds per acre on some of his improved pastures, starting about the first part of March. Most of his places are or will be fenced into four or five pastures to allow him to rotate his cattle. Where he can, he is putting in the fifth pasture to allow him to pull his cattle off altogether to utilize that pasture as a hay meadow.

Recently he was able to sell the timber off a place and realize enough out of the deal to pay for the clearing and reseeded of the 350 acres in Coastal, lovegrass and Bahiagrass. Scotty is a firm believer in upland pastures in this country as opposed to bottomland. With proper fertilization he says it is much simpler to manage the upland pastures.

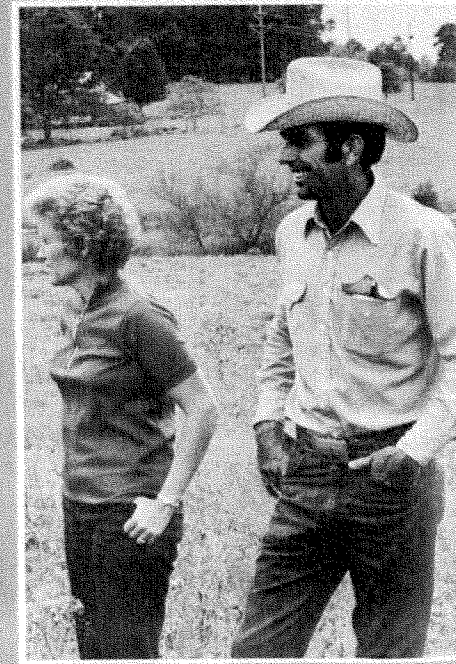
With a Hesston stacker for haying and his pasture rotation practices, Scotty has had more than adequate forage for his cattle in recent years. "I think I get from ¼ to ½ more production by rotating. And I can't even estimate how much time and money the stacker has saved us," he says. "Why sometimes I even get home before dark," he adds with a grin.

Scotty likes to have his cows through calving by the first of June and says in the future he may back it up even further. And he wants eventually to have nothing but

(Continued on Page 76)



An Angus mother watches over two ½ blood replacement prospects.



Scotty and Bitsy Wilson.

Beef Development Plan

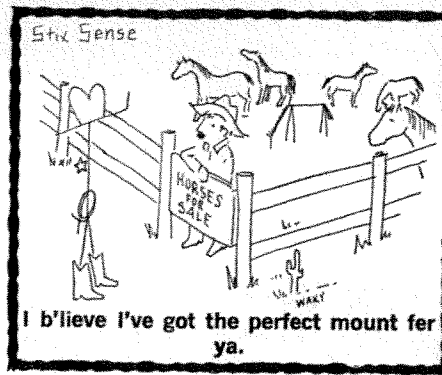
(Continued from Page 42)

picking up the tab, so it has the right to set the menu.

But the cost of the referendum (up to \$1 million) is a big stumbling block. With federal spending cutbacks and the USDA's marked foot-dragging, it appears the industry itself must come up with the money. If passage of the whole affair was assured, the money perhaps could be borrowed. But if the referendum were to fail, this would mean a lot of money down the drain.

There's no doubt that such a program is long overdue. The token 1/66 of 1 per cent of sales now spent on promotion is disgraceful. Fortunately, beef has sold itself to the American public pretty well thus far, doubling the consumption in the last 20 years.

The Beef Promotion Plan will undoubtedly pass through Congress, but the biggest hurdle is the referendum. Taskforce Chairman O. J. Barron reports: "The biggest job of all is yet to come. That is explaining the program to the 2.34 million cattlemen in the U. S. in preparation for the national referendum. In each state, we plan to organize a state Beef Development Taskforce and county taskforces, so we can explain the program to every cattleman, including the guy down at the cross roads." ■



Gulf Coast Angus Field Day Slated For Bill Clark Ranch

Bill Clark will host the Gulf Coast Angus Association field day June 14 at his ranch near Huntsville, Texas.

Neal Pratt, forage specialist with Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University, and Tom Prater, agricultural finance-management specialist from Texas A&M, will be featured speakers. A judging contest will also be held.

Bill Clark, president of the American Angus Association, has invited all area Angus breeders to attend this event. His ranch is located 12 miles east of Huntsville on Highway 190. Turn left on Highway 405 and proceed three miles to the ranch.

Turning 'em Black

(Continued from Page 64)

black cows on the place. "I like a little Brahman in my mama cows, but no more than a half," he says. "A few years ago when we eartagged a bunch of old cows that had to be at least 14 years old, we found that anything that had a little Brahman blood in it still had a good mouth. The Brahman blood really adds a lot of rustling ability and longevity to a mama cow, but I don't think the stocker and feeder market will ever want more than ¼ Brahman in a calf. And they sure do like for the rest to be Angus."

So Scotty buys good Angus bulls to go on these crossbred cows from Ralph Jackson of Kaufman, Texas, and is always more than satisfied with the way they work. He also uses these bulls on some Brahman cows to produce halfblood heifers as replacements. He also has some straight Angus cows which he breeds to Brahman bulls for a source of replacement heifers. Right now he is satisfied with the halfblood mother cows on the place but thinks he might save a few good ¼ blood heifers out of next year's calf crop to see how they will produce. "You never can tell," Scotty says. "The ¾ Angus steer might do just as well and be accepted even better by the buyers."

Scotty sells his steer calves each year to John Hobbs at Kingfisher, Okla. He ships them to John weighing about 450 pounds around the middle of September. There they go on wheat fields for the winter where Hobbs occasionally supplements their winter diet with some shelled corn. Last May when Scotty went up to see how the steers had done, they were weighing in the neighborhood of 750-800 pounds after their winter in Oklahoma.

After the wheat fields, the steers go on to a short feed period where a high percentage consistently comes out grading Choice.

Scotty has had to take market price for his heifer crop up to this point, but believes with the coming of the shorter feed periods, his ¼ Brahman-¾ Angus heifers may soon be in demand as replacements. And if Scotty and Bitsy figure these heifers may soon be in demand, they might be right. Everything else they've figured on looks pretty close to right. ■

Curtiss Names Records Manager

Hartley B. Veysey, a former progeny test coordinator with American Breeders Service, has joined Curtiss Breeding Service as beef records manager. He will work primarily with progeny testing.

Veysey, a Navy veteran, is a Vermont farm boy who graduated from Oklahoma State University. While in college, he majored in beef cattle breeding and was recipient of the Block and Bridle senior scholarship award.

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