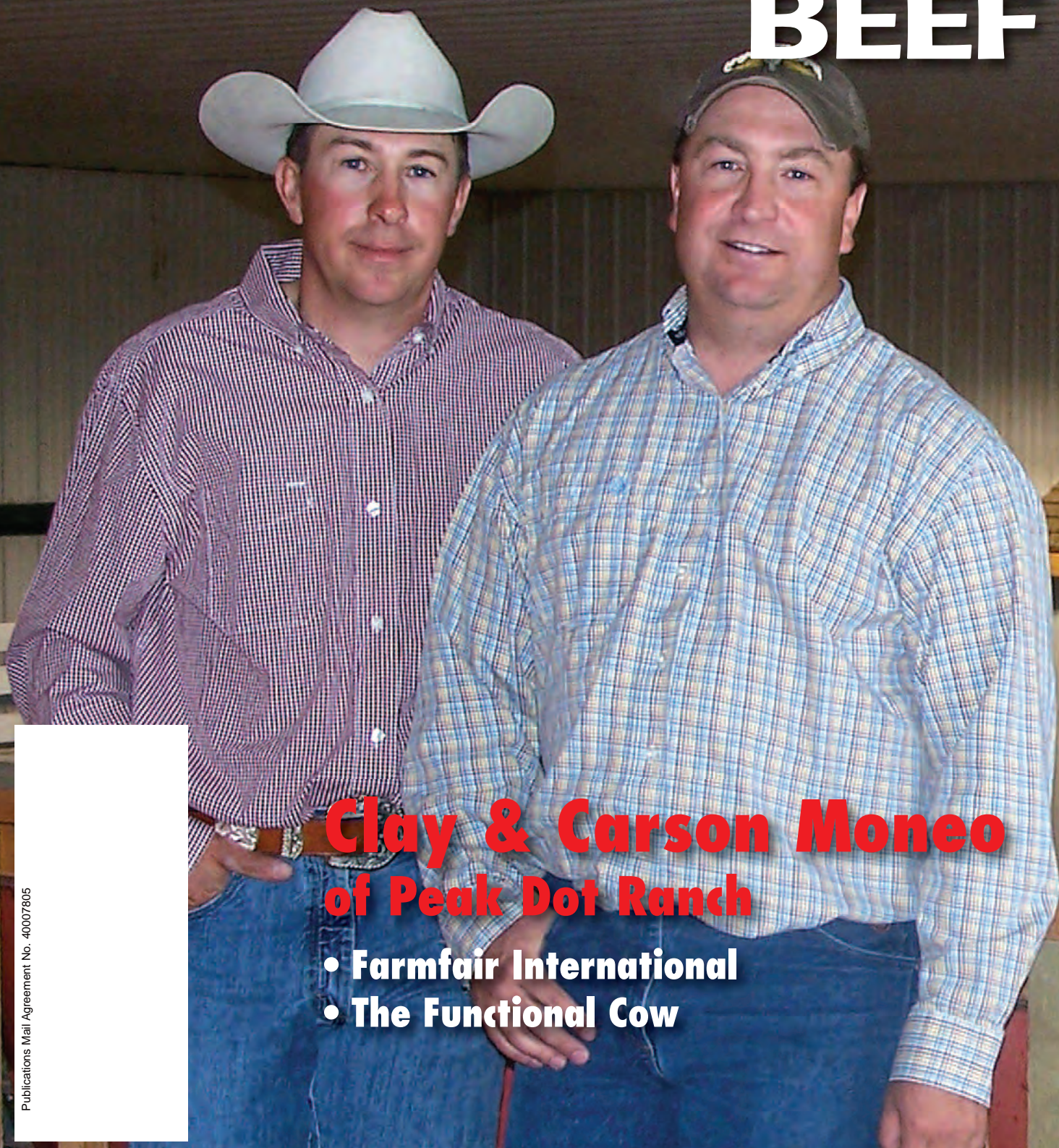


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# Saskatchewan BEEF



## Clay & Carson Moneo of Peak Dot Ranch

- Farmfair International
- The Functional Cow

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# Strong cornerstones

by Bonnie Warnyca

One might think that the cornerstone of a successful purebred herd would be a particular herd bull, but at Peak Dot Ranch the continued strength of their program lies in their ability to adapt new breeding technologies and aggressively market their product.

The land which became Peak Dot Ranch was first homesteaded by the Moneos in 1911, in the heart of Saskatchewan's short grass cattle country where cattle roam the hills of the historic Wood Mountain Post. Grandpa John plucked the name Peak Dot, from a Zane Grey novel he had read. Across the creek there's a whole lot of cowboy history with the Wood Mountain Stampede, Canada's oldest continuous running rodeo and the Rodeo Ranch Museum.

Cattle are still gathered on

horseback but technology and ingenuity have replaced some of the old ways. The ranch today consists of 9,000 acres with 3500 acres of tame hay and 1500 acres of crop land for silage. The 800 head Black Angus cow herd is split into two groups for fall and spring calving. The spring heifers calve in February while the rest of the spring herd calves on grass. The fall calving is on grass through September and October.

There are also 350 cows kept off the ranch under lease agreements for the calf crop. Add to that, a large embryo program where 300 embryos are implanted each year. "We believe that to be successful in this business, we have to keep growing," says Clay Moneo as he and his brother Carson sat down for an interview. "We felt that through embryo transplants and lease cattle, we could build our herd up quickly and strong by selecting the top end females each

year. We added the embryo program about three years ago and it has proven quite successful."

Embryo programs are costly as the outlay can run from \$300 to \$400 per cow for anywhere from a 40% to 65% success rate. "It is costly and there is some risk," accepts Carson. "We pay our producers \$1,000 for a live calf at weaning and we pay all the implant expenses. We collect our calves at weaning and prepare them for the sales. Our embryo calves have consistently out average our other sale calves by at least \$1,000."

Peak Dot Ranch holds two bull sales per year in the sale barn on the ranch. One is held in the spring (April 7, 2010), and one in the fall (December 3, 2009). It does add to the work on the ranch but it offers a multitude of opportunities for selling roughly 250 bulls per year. The December sale offers two-year old bulls with some commercial bred





Carson and Lana with sons Koen and Riley - "We build bulls to work in our environment, to calve easy, to wean heavy calves and to grow to a moderate mature weight."



Clay and Shannon with children Matt, Madison, Merit and Mavryk - "We believe that to be successful in this business, we have to keep growing."

heifers. The spring sale features fall bulls and yearling bulls as well as some bred purebred females and some open commercial heifers.

"Calving twice a year allows us to better utilize our herd bulls," explains the brothers. "We get a lot more production out of our own herd bulls by using them twice a year. It's also easier to sell such a large number of bulls in two separate sales. All our cows are timed and A.I.'d and then two weeks later herd bulls are turned out. We DNA all calves born on the second and third cycle."

Although the Peak Dot production and marketing program is anything but simple, the brothers point out that if you check their sale catalogues you will see their entire

production program is based on the progeny of four herd sires. "We do so much AI and embryo transplant that there are full brothers and half brothers in our bull sales," adds Carson. "We're confident that we're picking the right bulls that are high performing. We build bulls to work in our environment, to calve easy, to wean heavy calves and to grow to a moderate mature weight. We have bred out udder problems in our cow herd and are unbending when it comes to selecting for good legs and feet in our herd bulls. With roughly 90 percent of our customer base commercial ranches all across North America and in all types of environments, we can't afford to make selection mistakes."

When these men go looking for a

potential herd sire, they log in a lot of time walking through many North American herds. They look for a large uniform group of calves off one sire to see if the daughters are milking well. "Phenotype is the main thing we look at," says Clay, "but the dam has to be a great cow and the numbers need to be there. No bull is too expensive if he's the right one."

While Clay handles all the advertising, website updates and sale catalogues, it's up to Carson to field the bulk of the customer calls. "I've got four kids," laughs Clay, "so it's a little more difficult for me to be on the phone all hours of the day or night which is necessary in the purebred business. Dad (Terry) is semi retired but is willing to go out

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*Mia and Scott with son Luke. Scott does a lot of the day to day work, some of the AI and delivers the sale cattle.*



*Although they have turned control of the ranch over to the next generation, Terry and Barbara Moneo still play an active role in its operation.*

and visit our customers in person. The reason our family dynamic has worked so well for so long is that if Carson and I and dad went into a group of 500 bulls there's a 99 percent chance that we will all pick the same top ten. We think that

much alike when it comes to choosing cattle."

Brother-in-law Scott Turner and Clay and Carson's sister Mia also live on the ranch. Scott does a lot of the day to day work, some of the AI and delivers the sale cattle. Mia

works off farm at the Assiniboia Vet Clinic. Clay's wife Shannon works as a teacher and helps Clay with the advertising, while Carson's wife, Lana, recently took over some of the ranch's book work from the matriarch, Barbara Moneo.

Like my dad always said:  
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Unlike many of their competitors when BSE closed the border to Canadian cattle the brothers upped their advertising. "Before BSE about 40 percent of our cattle went to U.S. buyers," offers Clay. "By increasing our Canadian advertising we were able to increase our sales both east and west. Our sale numbers are slowly rising down south but we've continued to market into areas in this country that we hadn't supplied before."

### Hot Dogs for Sale

(Author unknown)

*A man lived by the side of the road sold hot dogs*

*He was hard of hearing and so had no radio*

*He had trouble with his eyes, so he read no newspapers*

*But he sold good hot dogs*

*He put up a sign on the highway telling how good they were*

*He stood by the side of the road and cried,*

*"buy a hot dog mister" and people bought*

*He increased his meat and roll orders*

*He bought a bigger stove to take care of his trade*

*He got his son home from college to help him*

**BUT THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED**

*His son said, "Father, haven't you been listening to the radio?"*

*If money stays tight we are bound to have bad business*

*There may be a big depression coming on*

*You had better prepare for poor trade."*

*Whereupon the father thought*

*Well, my son has gone to college*

*He reads the papers and listens to the radio and he ought to know*

*So the father cut down his meat and rolls orders*

*Took down his advertising sign*

*And no longer bothered to stand on the highway to sell hot dogs*

*And his hot dog sales fell almost overnight*

*"You're right son," the father said to the boy.*

*"We certainly are heading for a depression."*

### Handing over the reins

One of the cornerstones, on this ranch, is in the foresight of Terry Moneo to recognize that the best way to get his young sons' feet wet was to let them jump in. "Our grandfather retired young and let dad take over earlier than most," says Clay. "Dad did the same for us. We were making big decisions in our early 20s. He probably knew we were making some mistakes but he let us go ahead anyway without interference. He always said that most important decisions made are between the ages of 25 and 35. Now that we're both nearing 40, we can sure see the wisdom in that decision."

# Cattlegirls for the Cure

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