

# CATTLE CULTURE

by Lindsay King, assistant editor

## Put 'Em Up

*Immortalized in the western movies of days gone by, wild rags remain a symbol of the iconic cowboy, battling wind, rain and rustlers.*

Though these flamboyant statement pieces have the humblest of beginnings, their function on the range has always outweighed the fashion statement they tend to make.

The square cuts of cotton and feed sacks worn by cowboys and bank robbers alike, grew both in size and popularity with each passing century.

The 50-cent handkerchief at Wal-Mart is the closest relative to the first wild rags. Working cowboys and buckaroos needed something to keep their neck warm when the wind blew and the dust out of their mouth when the cattle moved.

But the life of a wild rag is not summed up quite that simply.

“The wild rag is one of the quintessential cowboy accessories that nobody thinks about but everybody needs,” says Tracy Taynor, owner of MT Wild Rags out of Winnett, Mont., and wife of the winter ranch manager for Gardner Angus Ranch. “It is one of those things we wear year-round.



The standard size for a wild rag is 36-inches squared. However, Tracy Taynor makes them as large as 60-inches squared.

When we are putting our boots on and making sure spurs are strapped, we are tying that wild rag on too.”

Designed with the working cowboy in mind, MT Wild Rags uses a blend of materials most easily described as silky, usually a poly or Charmeuse silk blend. Taynor chose the fabric over pure silk specifically for its durability. The smooth material keeps the cold out of the cracks of a Carhartt, but also wicks away sweat on a hot day.

“In the summer you can dip them in water to keep you cool and they keep the sun off your neck,” Taynor explains. “Most cowboys will think of a million ways to use something. The wild rag is no exception.”

They have been known to water horses, tie up broken limbs, blindfold people and animals — the list is truly endless when it comes to the uses of a wild rag. Though most useful when worn, the wild rag is truly best known for making a statement.

“In the western fashion world, wild

rags have taken off in the last two years,” Taynor says. “For us, function for the working cowboy has always been our priority. We need them to stand up to a hard day of work, but want to be beautiful enough to wear to town as well.”

Draped around the necks of rodeo queens, fashionistas, and the working man, the wild rag does not have a genre of owner. The statement of a wild rag belongs to those who own it, in every right. **AJ**



Most wild rag makers will charge \$1 per square inch, making the standard wild rag about \$36. A fair price for the poly-blend, silky wild rag. It withstands the elements out in nature and that of the washing machine. Pure silk is not only expensive, it wears out more quickly.