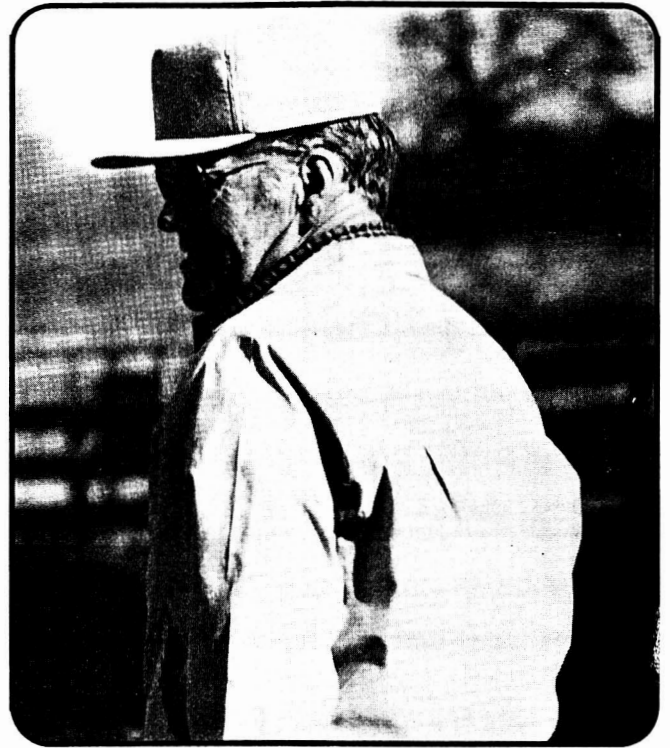
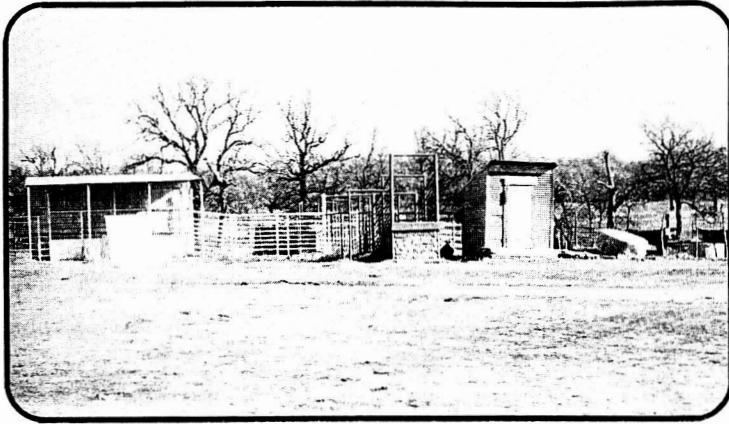


Working facilities are important in enabling Charles McClure to operate on a one-man basis. Corrals are designed for low labor: cattle are seldom "gathered".



by Nancy Ann Sayre

# Charles McClure Keeping it Simple ... And Black



*McClure's commercial herd is basically Angus. He is sold on the Angus female for her trouble-free nature in a harsh environment.*

Charles McClure raises commercial cattle in Texas—certainly there is nothing unique about that. His mature cows are basically black and his crossbreeding program is geared to keep them that way. Again, nothing so different from many other cattlemen in Texas and across the country.

That though, in itself, is what the Angus industry is built upon.

And when McClure offers an explanation of why he has Angus cows, he could be writing copy for the breed's ads.

"I really do like an Angus cow. They'll eliminate the eye trouble, they're easy keeping and have fewer udder problems. They're long-lived too—you can see I have cows in production that are 13-14 years old."

This cowman speaks from experience with several breeds and crosses. He has bred his cattle for function and nothing else. The environment of McClure's 7,000 acres located in Jacksboro, north of the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, has been a strict guide: fifteen acres to one cow/calf unit is the normal stocking rate in the area. Form must follow function and the one function of these cows is to wean a calf every fall.

## Many Years, Several Breeds

To step back a little, McClure has been in the commercial cattle business for better than 40 years. His background goes a few generations deep, back to a grandfather who spent a lifetime farming in the same area—trailing cattle and riding special trains to Kansas City with his market steers.

Charles, and his brother Robert, took over the family property in 1940. They have since divided the ranch into two separate units, but operate similarly and often work together. Charles' wife, Stella, has also been an important asset to the family operation.

McClure's original herd consisted of Hereford cattle. When he started to crossbreed, he turned to Shorthorn bulls. On the resulting base of crossbred cows, he used his first Angus bulls. That was 30 years ago, and he has used Angus in his breeding program ever since that first crop of black-baldy calves hit the ground.

"We can remember the time," he recounts,

"when those black-baldies were discriminated against. Then we later saw them draw top premiums. I still think that's an optimum cross."

Today, McClure is adding some Simmental blood to his herd, but several Angus bulls remain on the herd sire list as well.

"Anything that is 'off-color' is bred back to Angus. And all first-calf heifers drop black calves," he explains.

That could serve as another line for McClure's promotion of the breed, and that basic step of breeding heifers to known easy-calvers is typical of his management approach.

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*McClure varies the number of yearlings raised on his Texas ranch and fed in Iowa with pasture conditions and economic factors.*



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*Crossbred calves pay the bills in this commercial operation. Predominately Angus-bred females do their job well under a system of minimum management—frequent haying helps keep the herd quiet for easy handling.*

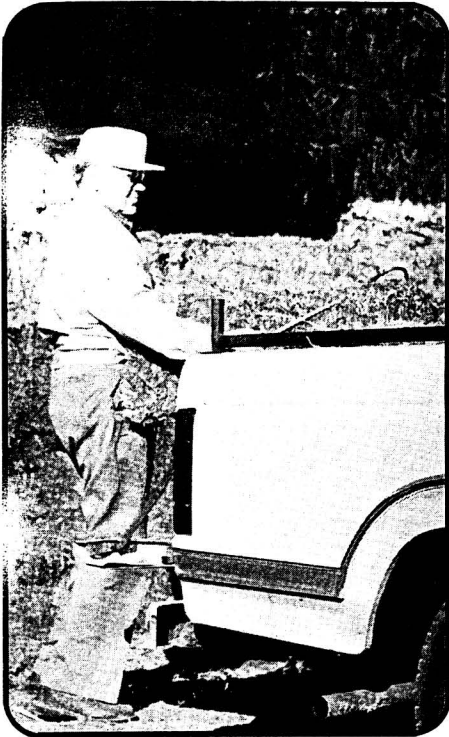


### One-Man Operation

McClure's operation is oriented to be a one-man setup: he and his brother each like being able to run things on their own.

Corral systems and pens are fashioned so that a single person can move, sort or load cattle. No, you will not catch this Texan "cowboying" his herd from a horse; he has never had one on the place.

"I don't have a horse or any dogs—I work the cows myself. That's cheap cowboying." The practice that makes this handling system work involves some simple cowpsychology. McClure hand-feeds his cows regularly—even during the seasons when he is not supplementing with range cubes.



*Charles McClure keeps his Texas operation simple. He raises commercial cattle on a one-man basis and has been doing so for 40 years.*

By spreading a little hay from his pickup a few times a week, McClure keeps the herd quiet and willing to follow him. Thus, he can coax the herd into a corral easily when he needs to. And the cattle tend to remain quiet when worked.

The frequent trips to the pastures also provide an easy and regular opportunity to check cows and calves.

Minimum work is the key to McClure's management though, so cattle are seldom handled. In fact, the calves are not touched until they are a few months old. At that time, they are "gathered" and tagged, branded, castrated, implanted, vaccinated, sprayed for flies and ear-notched (another means of ownership identification). McClure does recruit some help for this roundup—the work session usually takes place when his sons, Larry and Charles, are home for Christmas.

Before and after this time, it is clearly up to the mother cow to get the job done. There

is no pampering and the Angus genetics seem well-suited for the task of raising a calf with minimum management.

The operation, of course, is based on grazing and forages. For the months when pasture must be supplemented, McClure feeds range cubes and a limited amount of hay—all of which is purchased. The reason, again, is based on help: McClure would have to hire someone if he baled his own hay. Besides, he prefers alfalfa hay which he cannot grow.

### Commercial Cows and Yearlings

The herd numbers 135 mature cows, plus replacement stock and yearling steers whose

numbers vary with annual conditions of the pastures and general economy.

Calves, other than replacement heifers, are delivered to Iowa feedlots in July. For the past few years, McClure has retained ownership of the young cattle through the feedlot phase. He then sells the yearlings in February or March.

Perhaps this herd could be located anywhere; the operation could be typical of hundreds of commercial cattlemen. But the Angus breed is dependent on just such herds.

Men like Charles McClure that believe in the Angus female for her producing and mothering ability—the very qualities she was developed for—are the best advertisement we have. 