



**T**o be successful, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. However, improvements, like adding spokes to a wheel or tread to a tire, can always be made. That figurative tread is what can propel an operation forward by giving it stability and traction. Fifth-generation farmer and rancher Chris Cadle, Grant City, Mo., aims to do just that.

Cadle started with cattle when he was 11 years old with a 4-H heifer. This heifer was a Hereford, he says, and her calf just didn't perform well. Everyone he talked to said Angus was the way to go if he wanted to sell bulls. He's had registered and commercial Angus cattle ever since.

He credits his grandfather for getting him started in the cattle business. Both grandfathers were cattlemen and served as inspirations to him. His grandfather on his mom's side grew up on a farm in south Missouri with Braford cattle from Florida, and actually became a professional golfer. He traveled much with golfing, but he always wanted to go back to ranching. So, he started buying land around his hometown and ended up selling quite a few bulls.

Cadle's parents met at college in Columbia, Mo. His mom transitioned from a town with 600 in her graduating high school class to a town with a total population of 900. Grant City, Mo., was his dad's hometown.

Chris graduated from high school in 2003 and went to Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Mo. He studied agriculture education and knew he wanted to come back to the farm. He came home every weekend to keep up with his cattle, which he prefers to

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► **Above:** Chris Cadle (right) and Ashley West will move to a new farm after their wedding in August. The new place is only 240 acres away from where he grew up.

► **Right:** Cadle's heifer-development program uses estrous synchronization to add value for customers.

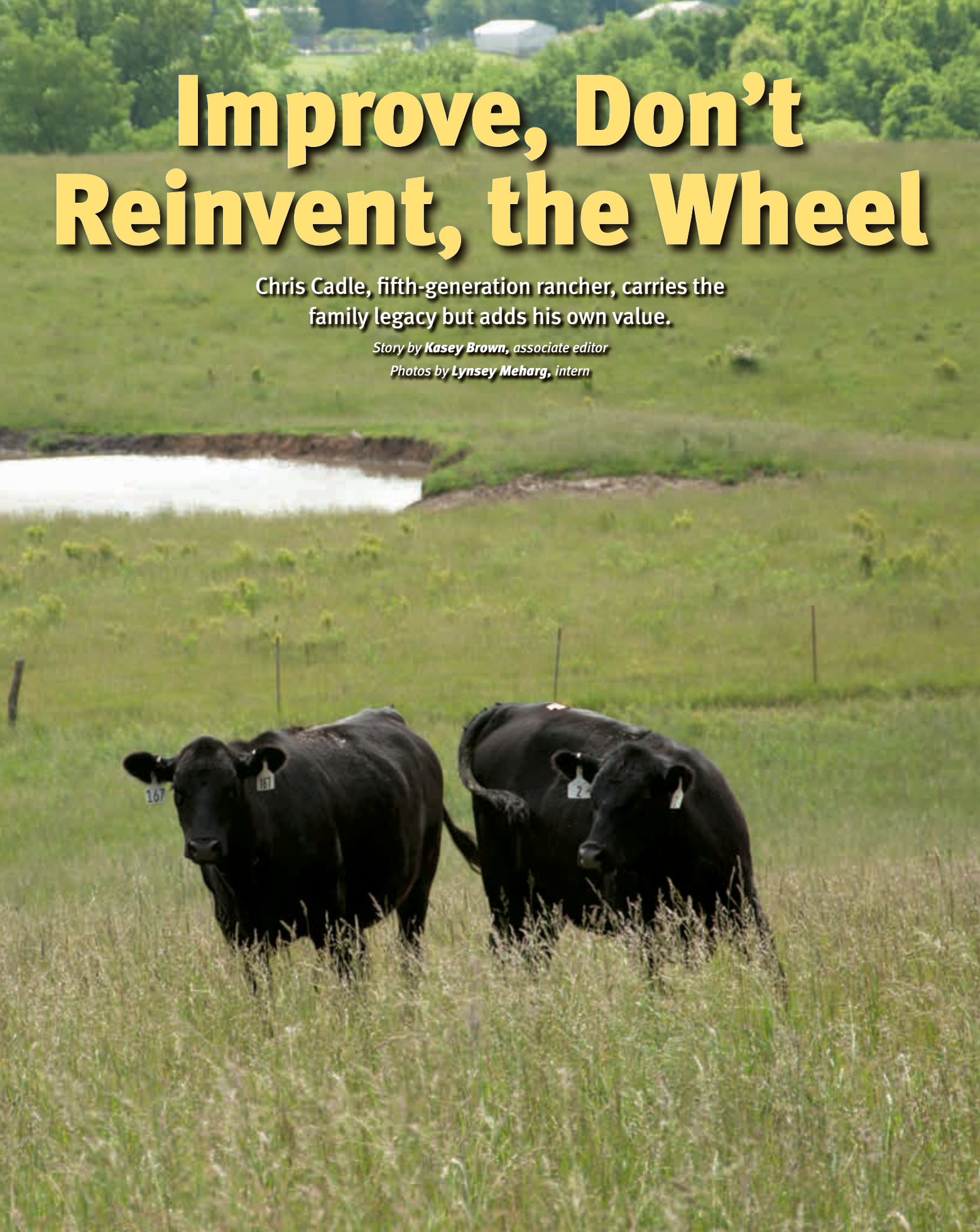


# Improve, Don't Reinvent, the Wheel

Chris Cadle, fifth-generation rancher, carries the family legacy but adds his own value.

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the row crops, and to help his dad. His grandpa had a stroke his senior year, so Chris came home just seven hours shy of graduating. He doesn't regret coming home then, and says he learned quite a bit while at school.

He came home from school in 2007, and started working with his dad. His dad has a commercial herd and feeder calves. Cadle bought his first Angus heifer from Glen Klippenstein of Klippenstein Family Farms (formerly Glenkirk Farms) in Maysville, Mo., and he's built his herd by keeping back his own heifers.

"Sometime you're going to actually have to sell a heifer," his dad teases.

When he first started with his dad, he traded labor for equipment and grazing land. Last fall, his dad became the state director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Columbia, Mo., so that takes him away from the farm more. They still work together to an extent, but Chris says he's more independent now.

What was the biggest challenge coming back to production agriculture and gaining that independence?

"Everything's so expensive," Chris says. "Time's also a challenge. There's no downtime, because there's always something to be done."

### Opportunities for the future

Despite these challenges, there are many opportunities.

"I think there's a good chance for young guys to come back in, and people need to look at that," he says. "Farms are getting bigger and bigger. There are a lot more older guys getting out of the business than

there are young guys coming back than there was 10 years ago. That worries me some."

Another opportunity is his engagement to Ashley West. They will be married in August. She studied agricultural business at Southwestern Community College and is involved in the show pig industry, though she helps out quite a bit on Cadle's operation, too.

Smiling, she says pulling calves is a lot easier than pulling pigs. She likes learning about the cattle, but laughs and makes it known that they'll have some pigs, too.

Cadle just bought a farm to which they will move after the wedding. It's located just down the road from the house in which he grew up till he was 7 years old — the same house that sheltered five generations of Cadles. This new farm was bought from Duane Warden, an older Angus rancher in the area. Cadle had bought three bull calves at Warden's dispersal sale last fall. The farm he grew up on has 968 acres in one piece, and there are only 240 acres between that farm and his new one, so he says it's nice that the two operations are so close.

The new farm has 814 acres, broken into about 200 acres of bottom ground and 600 acres of grass. Additionally, a 101-year-old farmhouse is on the property. Cadle says the whole farm, including the

barn and fences, needs updating, but the facilities will work for now. He just needs time and money to update it all.

In addition to the 814 acres on the new farm, he and his dad also have more than 2,000 acres of row crops. They grow corn, beans and wheat, which are mostly sold, though they put up silage and a good deal of hay for their cattle. The grass acres are primarily orchard grass, fescue and brome, though he has introduced improved varieties like red clover and bird's-foot trefoil.

He says his cow herd hasn't changed dramatically from his dad's operation; they still work together when his dad isn't in Columbia, though Chris' cattle numbers are slowly increasing. His goal is to fill the new farm with registered-Angus cows.

Cadle says he uses technology more than his dad does. For example, he registers his cattle through the American Angus Association's AAA Login, and he uses the Angus Mobile app on his phone. He adds that once he and Ashley get married, he hopes to take advantage of her ag business degree as she starts taking over more of the paperwork side of the operation.

This seedstock goal for the new farm will let him sell bulls to his commercial customers. Two large breeders in the area recently dispersed, so there is opportunity to gain more bull buyers.

His current herd is mostly a spring-calving herd, with a few fall-calving cows, too. He breeds with artificial insemination (AI) to bring genetic improvement to his herd. He reads the *Angus Journal*, and selects for calving ease in a balanced-trait approach.

He uses both the 7-day CIDR® and 14-day CIDR timed-AI protocols, though he says he prefers the 14-day protocol because the cows only have to go through the chute once. He used to heat detect his females and had a slightly better conception rate, but not enough better to justify the extra time. He says his conception rate with timed AI averages about 55%, though it has been as good as 70%.

Since his females go through the chute about four times per year — with CIDR insertion, AI, and vaccinations in the fall — he values docility. Driving through the pastures, the cows come up to the truck, especially when he gets out to walk among them.

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**— Chris Cadle**

► Cadle's goal is to fill his new farm with registered-Angus females.



## Making his mark

What really sets Cadle apart is his heifer-development program, which he started in 2005 while he was in college.

“I had some open pastures, and I didn’t want to go buy cows — heifers were cheaper. The first year, I just bought heifers off my dad,” he explains.

He advertised his heifer-development service for the first few years, but now word of mouth generates business. He buys heifers back from his bull buyers to create value for his bull business.

“It’s pretty easy to sell bulls to anybody for one bull, but my goal is to get them to come back for a second bull,” he says.

Since he started this while away at school, he credits his dad and grandpa for doing a lot of chores while he was gone. He drove home many weeknights and almost every weekend to get the business started. He has ways to increase the value of his heifer-development business.

He synchronizes his own females, and then has them scanned by ultrasound and pregnancy checked. Many of his customers buy 10-20 females from him, and these management methods make his females more marketable. Many of his customers work in town, and having his cows and heifers synchronized means that his customers have to take off less time from work for calving. Thus, grouping his females by synchronization dates helps him market his cattle and adds value for his customers.

He takes pride in being a fifth-generation Cadle to farm, but adds his own value to the operation.



► “It’s pretty easy to sell bulls to anybody for one bull, but my goal is to get them to come back for a second bull,” Chris Cadle (right) says, as he checks on bulls with fiancé Ashley West.

