

Under The Northern Sky

Diamond J Cattle Co.

By Billi J. Miller



The Adamson family gathered in one of their pastures. In front is Lois Adamson (Art's widow), in back from left, Shelly, Dale (on horse holding granddaughter, Lily), Terry, Alicia (holding daughter, Ivy) and Scott.



After taking a tour of the outfit and seeing the healthy, robust cattle, a visiting cattle buyer told the Adamson brothers, Terry and Dale, “If you were a steer this is where you’d want to be.”

Located near Makwa, Sask., less than an hour outside of Meadow Lake, the Diamond J Cattle Co., has been gaining attention not only from cattle buyers, but also from cattle associations.

For almost a century, ranching has been in their blood. It was 1928 when their grandfather Fred Adamson moved to the Meadow Lake area and rented a quarter section of land and began running about a dozen head of cattle. His first Hereford bull was purchased in 1930. In 1935, he made the move to a ranch along the Beaver River where he worked for several years for cattle shares. He and his family stayed, and Fred and his two sons, Jim and Art, continued to grow the herd until 1947 when they moved to their present location in the Makwa area. In 1963, Jim and Art purchased a farm three miles south of the original ranch site that Jim then moved to. Brothers Jim and Art, along with Art’s boys Dale and Terry worked together until 1995 when the ranch was split up. It was then that Art and his sons Dale and Terry began Diamond J Cattle Co.

These days, Diamond J is a family affair for Terry and his wife Penny, Dale and his wife Shelly, and their son Scott and his wife Alicia (who joined Diamond J in September of 2014). They all work together to grow the Hereford, Red and Black Angus operation. Art Adamson’s widow Lois (Mom to Terry and Dale) still lives on the ranch too.

Memories of their grandfather Fred are limited now. Terry only remembers him after they had already moved to town. Dale remembers him haying with his horses and always wishing he were able to do it too. When Dale and Terry grew up, they both tested out the waters elsewhere. Dale had a career in brand inspecting and Terry was the 1981 Canadian Cowboys Association Bareback Champion. They both realized ranching was their future though, and Dale settled on the ranch in the ‘70s and Terry did so too in the ‘80s. At that time, their father solely raised Herefords; now they have Red and Black Angus in their cow/calf and backgrounding operation.

Things have changed and evolved in other ways with the brothers at the helm. They used to feed silage and cut their own hay but now, they buy their feed. Terry remembers suggesting that change to their dad Art back in the day but as Terry remembers; his dad didn’t jump at the thought. Terry “let it go” for years,

then he and Dale made the change years later. The Adamson’s say today’s biggest challenge is marketing. For the generations before them, the struggle would have been opening the land up.

Their pastures are very healthy and carefully managed as are the cattle themselves. Elaborate exclusion and cross-fence systems have been constructed to improve their grass, manure accumulation and topsoil. The exclusion fences also protect the water sources. Two rivers surround the family ranch, Horse Head Creek and Makwa (Loon) River. The cattle are watered from troughs, which are supplied from the dugouts or rivers from solar-powered pumps. The Adamson’s employ rotational grazing management with their cattle moved every three to five days to prevent overgrazing. The trio does so by horse and moving them on horseback isn’t difficult. “When you ride in after a few days you can bet they are waiting for you,” says Terry.

Taking care of the environment is a key part of their business today so much so that they were awarded a Saskatchewan Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA) in 2012. The award was presented to Terry and his wife Penny, and Dale and his wife Shelly by the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association. It means a lot to the brothers, and they believe their Dad would have been proud of how they’ve improved the ranch. The Saskatchewan Hereford Association has also awarded the Commercial Cattleman of the Year Award to the Adamson brothers in 2005.

Dale’s hope is that their business remains a family operation, and that the family runs Diamond J Cattle Co for as long as possible. Scott’s long-term vision is to carry it on with his family and that hopefully his kids and their kids will want to be there. It’s been a wonderful place for his childhood memories, he says, and his extended family’s memories as well. It’s always been a good place to be, to call home, and to experience. And, he wants that to go on — of course while being a profitable business.

“We want to involve our kids and instill in them a strong work ethic and a passion for ranching,” say Scott and Alicia. “It’s important to try not to busy them with so many outside activities that they don’t have time to enjoy all the simple pleasures of our lifestyle”.

“Many families work so hard to afford activities for their children that they find themselves running each day of the week to an activity that they forget to enjoy where they are,” says Scott. Dale agreed saying: “It’s a way of life” and it’s important not to forget to “stop and smell the roses.”

As Terry Adamson said, his ultimate goal is for Diamond J Cattle Company to “take care of the environment, growing good grass and selling good beef.” Judging by the health of their grasslands and herd, their legacy is assured. *C