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## TX Panhandle Wagyu: Morris Stock Farm & 4B Meats

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Mixing It Up





# Morris Stock Farm + 4B Meats:

Three Generations Producing Highest Quality Wagyu Beef

By Carolina Cantrell

For sixty years, the Morris family has been feeding cattle on the same piece of land located relatively in the middle of nowhere, about 20 miles between Sunray and Gruver. Through a series of expansions, the operation can now handle up to 9,500 head of cattle with pens suited for one to 200 head and takes pride in giving individual tailor-made service to fit each customer's feeding goals for a variety of cattle including commercial, all-natural F1 Wagyu, and Kobe Beef. The Morris Stock Farm is also home to 4B Meats.

It all started nearly a hundred years ago when current manager Joe Morris' grandfather, V.R. Morris, set out with a team of horses, a wagon, and a milk cow on a tractor. "He was on his way from Blue Mound, Oklahoma, which is north of Perryton, to Hartley County," explained Joe over some mid-day meatloaf prepared by his daughter Brittany in her home, which happens to be where Joe grew up. Evidence of family and the family business is everywhere in the now four-bedroom home. 4B Meats logo clips hold photos of Brittany and Dustin's two boys Eastin (8) and Briggs (10) on the fridge, along with their accomplishments from school.

"Well, this was where the tractor broke down," continued Joe. "The horses ran off back to Blue Mound. So, he decided to stay. He just set up stakes here. I grew up in this house back whenever it was a lot smaller. They

were able to add on as the feedlot grew."

Joe's wife Nancy looked up from her plate and added, "When Brittany and Dustin moved in here, their kids made the place alive again. Our house, where we live now right across the road, was a dugout back in the '30s. Joe's dad was born there. As times got better, they put a house in on top of it. It has had a lot of personalities over the years."

The 1920s and 30s were not a time for the weak of heart. Pictures hanging on the walls in the Morris Stock Farm office serve as reminders of the family roots and the perseverance that carried them through. "Here is my grandfather in a '28.... what do you call that? It's not a travel trailer, but it's a big, camper type thing, and Grandma's in the back, cooking right there," explained Sherry from her desk where she keeps records and visits with customers.

"That's how they'd travel from here to Wagon Mound and out to New Mexico to look at land. At one point, my grandfather went to California too, because everything was droughted out here. He just took off and went out there for a while," she continued. "Here's a picture of a big dust storm in Spearman in 1935. Can you imagine seeing that come across? And here's my dad on his horse named Sam. Mama had a picture of him and found a man that could make it into this painting."



The Borden Family

Today, three generations of the family live and work within a half mile of each other on the same section of land. Joe and his wife Nancy manage the operation along with Joe's sister, Sherry Morris McWilliams. Joe and Nancy's daughters Brandy Morris and Brittany Borden are active in the business, as well as Brittany's husband Dustin. The third generation – Brandy's two and Brittany's two children – are now old enough to help out when not in school.

In 1958, the Texas Panhandle was suffering a major drought. "Dad had to sell his cattle and took a big loss. He said at that point, he would never do that again," Joe explained. "So, he started building the feedyard for his own cattle. Then other people wanted their cattle fed. It opened to the public in 1962. It was mostly just little calves, getting them big enough to go to big feedyards. We did that for many, many years, and we got where we were finishing a lot of cattle. We've never been empty, and we've never missed a feeding."

Cattle fed at the Morris Stock Farm go all over the country. "We have some customers that have large operations, but then we also have individuals with just a few they want to feed," Joe explained. "You know, we've been small people all of our lives, and so I understand what they go through."

After Vance and his wife Ruth passed, the operation continued as a preconditioning yard until about 12 years ago. "My sister Sherry was down at the Farm Show in



Joe and Nancy Morris, Sherry Morris McWilliams, Brittany and Dustin Borden

Amarillo in 2010, and she ran into some guys with the Wagyu industry," Joe continued. "They were wanting to find somebody that could feed out Wagyu cattle, which come to find out was right down our alley."

It all started with five different owners. "They each sent us five head to see if we could feed them," said Joe with a grateful smile. "We must've impressed them because we haven't had any want for customers since. It is definitely a God thing not a Joe thing, because I couldn't have figured it all out."

Every year since then, Morris Stock Farm has expanded

in some way or another and is now the biggest feedlot in the Texas specializing in F1 Wagyu and full-blood Wagyu animals. Additionally, Morris Stock Farm is the only feedlot at this time in the state of Texas feeding the product Kobe Tech E to Wagyu cattle. Kobe Tech E is a molasses-based product that is used to aid in better conversion, weight gain, and marbling.

Cattle fed at Morris Stock Farm have won multiple award-winning brisket and steak competitions. "Midland Meat Company feeds out at our place. They have won some pretty prestigious contests including the Jack Daniel's World Championship Barbecue Invitational, the Houston Livestock and Rodeo World Championship, and the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo Bar-B-Que Cook-Off and Triple Crown Steak Competition," Joe shared proudly.

"All-natural, grain-fed, Black Wagyu beef composition is quite different than that of commercial American beef alone, producing meat that is healthier for consumers," explained Dustin Borden, Joe's son-in-law who runs 4B Meats with his wife Brittany and their two sons. 4B Meats is a downstream business which complements their small Angus cow herd using Wagyu bulls to produce F1 Wagyu, similar to Kobe beef found in Japan. Wagyu cattle, free of growth hormones, are fed for a longer period of time than commercial cattle. The fat is

higher in monounsaturated fat leading to higher levels of oleic acid, omega-6, omega-3, and other essential fatty acids.

"Most of these cattle come in as yearlings and are fed 400 days. They're bumping right up against 30 months of age when they leave," Joe added. "We feed them slow, don't use any implants or growth hormones. We keep them as natural as we can. Time is your friend with this breed. If you harvest them around 20 months, they may marble satisfactorily, but if you can give them that extra time, they just keep getting better."

When the Morris family started feeding in the 60s, only three percent of all cattle graded prime across the industry. "It is now up to 10 percent. Whenever we ship a set of cattle, out of a load of 30 head, we may have two choice and the rest of them will be prime. Of that prime, half of those will be ultra prime."

"If you try this, you won't go back to the commercial," said Joe. "People automatically assume if it's Wagyu, it's more than they can afford, but that's not true. Brittany and Dustin sell their ground beef for \$5 a pound. That's about the same as commercial and tastes so much better. They dry-aged theirs for at least 21 days."

Brittany has a passion for feeding people and wholeheartedly believes that everyone deserves the



Vance Morris and his horse Sam



Joe Morris with daughter Brandy



Morris Stock Farm — Gruver, TX

ability to get quality protein for their table. “4B Meats is really Dustin’s brainchild. I’m so grateful that he wanted to do this, because we can keep the price of our ground beef low,” said Brittany. “When people try it, they love it. Then, they typically come back and buy it 40 pounds at a time and get it for \$4 a pound.”

A compassionate yet driven achiever, Brittany graduated from Gruver in 2002 before heading to Texas A&M where she received her undergrad and graduate degrees in Ag Economics. During her second year of grad school, a professor encouraged her to get the experience of working with sorghum. “So that’s where I met Dustin. He was basically working full time for the sorghum program while working on his master’s. We dated for eight months and were engaged for 10 months before marrying down in College Station. We were there for another three years, maybe,” explained Brittany who never thought she would be back home where she grew up. “Then we moved up to Canyon for six years before moving here, and we have been here for about five years.”

4B Meats was an idea that marinated in Dustin Borden’s mind for years but was formally founded in the Spring of 2018, just about the time their third calf crop was hitting the ground. Today, 4B Meats harvests

around 100 head a year. The Wagyu meat offered by 4B Meats has primarily been bred, born, fed and harvested all within a 35-mile radius from the Morris Stock Farm where the Bordens live. From the everyday checking

of the cattle, feed, and water, to weaning and working calves, as well as unloading and breaking down the boxes of beef, the Bordens do it all together as a family.

“If it’s alive, Dustin takes lead, and if it’s in the package already, I take lead,” said Brittany. When we started, we operated out of two chest freezers in the garage, and we were remodeling the house at the time. So, all of our stuff was in the garage too. Two years later, we were very fortunate to have our walk-in freezer, because that’s when COVID hit and sales increased significantly. If we had not had that facility, we would’ve been going to the butcher every other day”

Dustin added, “We have plans to build another freezer, because we’ve outgrown the one that we have. We’ll use one for all of our beef cuts and

the other one will be for all the ground beef and our jerky meat. We store it until we have enough to take to Fatman’s in New Mexico. He does a great job making our jerky. Our sausage products are made in Topeka, Kansas. We drive our meat up there, have them process it, and then we go up there and get it.”



The Bordens have their cattle processed at Brown's Meat Locker in Stratford. "I give them a cut sheet every time, and say 'I want this animal cut like this.' Sometimes I need tomahawk steaks and sometimes I need whole tenderloins. Brown's is very well suited to smaller producers like us who want to retail their own meat."

The farmer's markets were how the Bordens started retailing 4B Meats. "Spearman had a Farmer's Market and that's how we built our customer base up. We started going to them in other towns, too. There would be weeks that we would go with four full coolers of a variety of cuts and we'd come back with them empty," Brittany continued.

"We have great customers. Having the retail locations - SALT in Amarillo, The Water Store in Borger, and Watonga there in Perryton has really helped. It's great to be able to say, 'Hey you can go down to SALT and grab a couple of rib eyes. If they don't have what you want, just let me know, and I'll bring it next time.' Prior to having our retail partners, we were delivering orders or people were coming out here [to Morris Stock Farm] to pick up their beef. We also work with restaurants across the Panhandle. 4B is on the menu at Macaroni Joes and Girasol in Amarillo, Roma in Borger and Borger Country Club. It's been great to see the response."

Brittany still does deliveries all over the Texas Panhandle and loves visiting with customers. "It is such a blessing. Just this past Saturday, I was behind on every delivery that I made, because I got to sit and talk with my customers," she smiled. "It is really rewarding to get to know what's going on in their lives and with their kids. It's not a transaction; it's very much a relationship. I walked into United the other day, and I saw two of my customers checking out. Then we spent the next 20 minutes chatting. I just love it."

While direct and retail sales are primary for 4B Meats, they do ship. According to Joe, perhaps the most challenging shipment all started with an urgent phone call. "They had a customer call in on a Thursday afternoon and said, 'We want to send Sue Aikens some meat.' She's that woman on the National Geographic show 'Life Below Zero' who lives in the middle of nowhere in Alaska," Joe explained. "The customer told Brittany that the plane was leaving on Saturday morning. If it didn't get on that plane, it would be another three weeks before they could get it to her. So, the meat left here Friday morning, and made it to her Saturday afternoon."

"We get to do some pretty cool things with 4B Meats. I really enjoy being able to donate beef for community dinners and fundraisers. Dustin didn't know I was going to turn it into a charity in addition to being a business, but we make it work," Brittany concluded. "We have a saying around here that there's always room for one more at our table. Making room, helping each other, making it work for everyone - that is what it's all about. That's being family." *AW*



The original homestead, Morris Stock Farm



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