

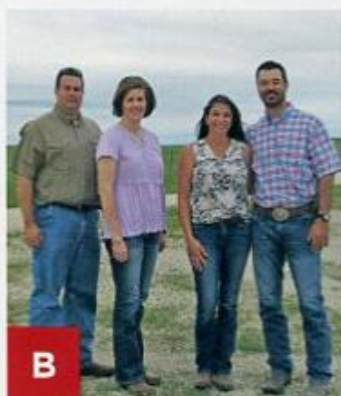
Ranchers participate in exchange tour



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A Dirck and Natalie Hoagland of Leavenworth and Jay and Alice Ann Yeargin from Greenfield, TN, participated in a Kansas Livestock Foundation/Tennessee Beefoundation exchange tour in May and June. The two couples got acquainted during dinner with KLA leadership and staff. Pictured (L to R) are KLA staff Ryan Higbie and Letty Meek; Joe Carpenter, Downey Ranch, Wamego; Dirck and Natalie; Jay; KLA President Barb Downey, Wamego; Alice Ann; KLA President Elect Harry Moser, Wheaton; and KLA Chief Executive Officer Matt Teagarden.

B The Yeargins marveled at the wide-open spaces of Kansas. The Hoaglands treated them to amazing views of both grass and cattle on their Gunbarrel Ranch near Eskridge. They also visited the Hoaglands' J&N Ranch and F. Morgan Feedyard at Leavenworth. Both couples are multi-generation ranchers working with the husbands' fathers while raising the next generation. Jay and Alice Ann have a 6-year-old son, Patrick, and Dirck and Natalie have two boys, Dayton, 7, and Reed, 5.

C Melissa Hildebrand Reed of Hildebrand Dairy near Junction City shared information about her family's operation, which provides fresh milk to area grocery stores in addition to having a retail outlet on-site. Their calf barn is shaded, as is the cows' free-stall barn that includes automated fans and misters.

D Shawn Tiffany (left) of Tiffany Cattle Company at Herington described the history of the feedyard he and his brother Shane own and operate. The Tiffanys feed over one million pounds of feed daily to a total of 25,000 head at two locations. The group later visited Creekstone Farms Premium Beef at Arkansas City, where many of the cattle fed at Tiffany are processed. Creekstone harvests 1,300 cattle a day for four programs: organic, non-hormone treated, natural and conventional beef.

E The group visited Blythe Angus near White City where they saw the benefits of prescribed burning. Debbie Lyons-Blythe outlined her advocacy efforts and her work on the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. Her son, Trenton, discussed his new venture, Level Creek Outfitters, which created an additional income stream, allowing the next generation to join the ranch full time. Pictured (L to R) are Trenton, Debbie, Natalie, Eric Blythe, Dirck, Jay and Alice Ann. The next day, Frank Harper of Sedgwick hosted a tour of his Gilmore Creek Ranch near El Dorado where he and ranch manager Craig Marsolf explained how they receive and background calves in a set of grass traps.



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F Dirck Hoagland (right) of Leavenworth visited with Jay (left) and Ronnie Yeargin of Greenfield, TN, about their respective cattle and farming operations. A unique component of the Yeargins' business is flooding corn ground on the nearby river each winter for a duck-hunting lease. They also raise wheat, hay and soybeans and run a 300-head commercial cowherd.

G The Yeargins and Hoaglands visited Lone Oaks Farm, a working farm administered by University of Tennessee Extension. The facility is a unique lodging venue and serves as a 4-H youth camp where students learn how farming and environmental stewardship work hand-in-hand. The tour also included a visit to the Southern Natural 412 Processing Plant in Lexington, which runs a value-added program for a high-end retailer.

H Lake Elliot (right) and his father Joe operate Robert Elliot & Sons Angus at Adams, TN. During a tour of their operation, he explained to Dirck Hoagland how they measure everything and cull aggressively in order to yield high-quality cattle in their registered herd. The Elliots also raise tobacco, with the best leaves exported to Europe to be used as exterior wraps for fine cigars.

I At the Jack Daniels Distillery in Lynchburg, they not only learned how whiskey is made, but also heard how the mash byproduct is sold to local farmers like Jerry Ray from Tullahoma. Ray hauls 4,000 gallons of mash twice a day to feed 700 head. The mash is high in protein and allows him to background calves from 600 lbs. to 900 lbs. in about 90 days. During a tour of the Jackson Co-op Feed Mill, the two couples saw livestock pellets, salt blocks and MonsterMeal, a custom deer feeder pellet sold on Amazon, being made.