

## TSSRM OUTSTANDING RANGELAND MANAGEMENT 2019

Ken Clayton

Fifth generation rancher Ken Clayton has been serving all of his adult life, serving his family, the land he loves, his life-long neighbors, and his Creator. He is a leader who leads by example: calm, intelligent, and fair. Everyone who knows this man has relied on his advice at one time or another, and he is always willing to help.

Ken's family arrived at Weatherford, Texas, in 1881. They operated several businesses and ran some cattle, then in 1953, the Clayton Ranch was officially formed. It was operated by Ken's father, Maurice Clayton. Maurice, a progressive man for his time, began bringing Angus cattle into the Bryson area in the 1950s. The family still runs only Angus cattle.

Ken and his brother, Kirk, took over operation of Clayton Ranch upon his dad's passing. "I ranched with my brother, Kirk, for 38 years until his passing in 2013. Our dad taught us to work each day to make a decent living, improve livestock, and be good stewards of the land," he said. "As we invested in our livestock or land, we always agreed that we had to find a way to take those steps."

By keeping their own replacement heifers and concentrating on high quality purchased bulls or AI, they have developed an excellent herd, producing quality calves that are sought by a clientele of neighbors across North Texas.

Ken Clayton became involved in soil and water conservation activities as a young rancher. In 1974, he was elected to serve on the Jack Soil and Water Conservation District. He has been on that board ever since.

Clayton Ranch covers 6799 acres spread out over three North Texas Counties. Operation of the ranch normally falls on Ken and his wife, Helen, with help from his two daughters and his two son-in-laws on occasion. Most of the ranch is owned land, with a portion leased from other family members.

Clayton Ranch has utilized cost-share programs for many years, and is currently involved in EQIP and CSP activities to assist in carrying out planned conservation practices. The major practices carried out on Clayton Ranch have included: Aerial, mechanical, and IPT brush management; range and pasture planting; water well; trough; pond; barbed wire fence; electric fence; prescribed grazing; planned grazing system; and others.

In August of 2017, Ken was invited to be a presenter at the 2017 Texas Grazing Conference sponsored by the Texas Grazing Land Coalition. He titled his presentation "Profitability and Stewardship: Can You Achieve Both?" His first sentence said, "My goal today is to give you common sense information and ideas to take home which can help start you on the road to being more profitable and a better steward of your land." This very basic approach is classic Ken Clayton at work trying to help his neighbors.

Ken Clayton is a true conservationist. It's not easy to make money and take care of the land at the same time, but he has done both for years. And probably most important, he is training his children to carry on the Clayton tradition.