

**Representing the Municipal district of Cypress County
Fawn Creek Ranching
Geoff & Melanie Watson
Irvine, Alberta**

Fawn Creek Ranching is a mixed farm involving cattle and crop production. The family's interests are more with ranching, so they've been seeding farmland back into grass and alfalfa.

During the drought, along with seven neighbors and with federal and municipal government financing, they were able to pipe water from a natural source using a gravity-fed system. With this system, there are no pumps necessary, with enough pressure to service homes and livestock while still maintaining the historic flow of the spring at the source for the natural habitat. They plan to pursue a water bottling venture using water from the spring.

Geoff and Melanie moved to the area from Maple Creek in 1992 and started their family. Gemmel is 13 years of age, Jewelisa is 12 and Evan is seven. Melanie's parents farmed and ranched for 53 years, 10 miles south of Irvine, before returning to Medicine Hat. Geoff and Melanie worked with them for seven years before finally taking over the operation.

Fawn Creek Ranching is run with the help of the Watsons' extended family. Melanie's mother and two sisters and their families, who live within a 20-mile radius, and Geoff's father and brother in Maple Creek, work closely with Geoff and Melanie.

They try to involve their children when they can, so that the kids understand and appreciate the work involved in running a farm. The children are eager to help with calving and with the livestock duties overall.

Geoff is an Irvine Lions member and has been involved in community benefits. Geoff and Melanie are Irvine Curling Club members and encourage their children to participate in local sports such as curling and school sports and activities. They help with school fund-raising, and Geoff led a project to upgrade the school playground.

Geoff is a member of the 4-H Beef Council and assistant leader for the Irvine 4-H Beef Club. He was also part of initiating a project called Halo -- Helicopter Air Lift Operations—in which a group of community members raise funds for a rescue helicopter to serve the area. This project needs more funding and hopefully will proceed. Gemmel and Jewelisa are Irvine 4-H Beef Club members and the whole family gets involved with all that goes along with 4-H.

Along with Melanie's father, the Watsons have entered their cattle in the Pen Show at the Medicine Hat Exhibition. Over the years, they've had Champion and Reserve Champion heifers at this show.

"Our main goal is to maintain and expand our operation with the involvement of our family so that we can give our children the opportunity to continue the family farm in the future, as our parents did for us."

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