

CONSERVATION Showcase

If You Don't Take Care of the Land

David Cain of Mountainair, New Mexico, has wisdom that may belie the fact he is a beginning rancher – but it comes from a heritage that is steeped in the home place where he hopes to live for a long time.

“If you don't take care of the land, it won't take care of you,” Cain told a KOAT television crew recently. The crew was filming Cain as part of a feature that was recognizing the American cowboy. New Mexico's Senator Jeff Bingaman had co-sponsored a U.S. Senate resolution designating July 25, 2009 as the day for such recognition, and it seemed appropriate to look at what today's cowboys are doing to “green” America.

And, as Mountainair district conservationist, Louis King said, David Cain is the “real deal.”

From corrals that would be the envy of any rancher - to fencing one should take pride in – and most importantly healthy, powerful looking cattle and rapidly improving rangeland – Cain runs an operation that is worthy of the highest praise.

“He is either a progressive traditionalist, or a traditional progressive,” said King. “While yesterday's ranchers strived to take care of their land and stock as best as they could, ranchers like Cain have available to them newer, better technology – and while they may use the best science that is available, if science develops something better I bet the David Cains would adopt it.”

The Cain Ranch suffered from intense pinon-juniper infestations when David took it over and he, working with NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), has launched a major rangeland restoration effort. Concurrently, he has laid pipeline, installed water



facilities (both storage tanks and water troughs), and done cross-fencing to establish the infrastructure necessary to implement a sound grazing management system on his spread.

While Cain's Ranch is a stellar example of wise management, Cain notes that ranching is still a tough business.

He jokes, “Behind every successful rancher, is a soul-mate who has a job in town.”

David's wife, Brenda, works as a veterinarian.

Cain also has some advice for today's generation of FFA students, and that is to work on different ranches and see first hand what works. See different ways of doing things.

It is ranchers, like Cain, who are taking advantage of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and other Farm Bill measures to “green” America – and in the process bringing sound conservation science to Mountainair and the rest of New Mexico.

