

# FEATURED LANDOWNERS

## Lee & Saunda



*The Phillipses have planted many trees utilizing the Campbell County Conservation District's seedling tree program.*

Lee and Saunda Phillips moved to 10 acres west of Gillette in the spring of 1992. They remember how green it was and how they thought they had moved to an area of lush forage and rolling hills. Then reality hit. The Phillipses had made their move during a particularly wet year for Campbell County. They had actually moved to an area in a 12- to 14-inch annual precipitation zone where the norm is short grass and high winds.

After moving in, the Phillipses realized the previous landowners had left some concerns that needed to be addressed. Under the advice of their University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service educator, they used gypsum and sand to reclaim an area that was an old pigpen. After tilling those materials into the soil and letting the area set for a year, they planted the pigpen with annual rye. Previous owners were also careless when changing oil in their vehicles. Oil was allowed to drain from the vehicles directly onto the ground, contaminating the soil. Organic matter and new topsoil was tilled into this area to reclaim it.

Saunda and Lee own six draft horses they use to pull wagons for parades and special occasions. They first became interested in draft horses at the National Western Stock Show when they stayed late to watch the draft horse show just for fun. Saunda says by the end of the day, Lee was getting some hands-on education from one of the participants on the grooming of a draft horse for show. The Phillipses got their first two draft horses from a pregnant mare urine rescue service

# Phillips



*Lee and Saunda Phillips can sustain six draft horses on 10 acres of land.*

in Canada, a service that rescues horses that have been used for the collection of urine used in the production of a human medication called Premarin®. The young horses go to Iowa in the summer for training on an Amish farm.

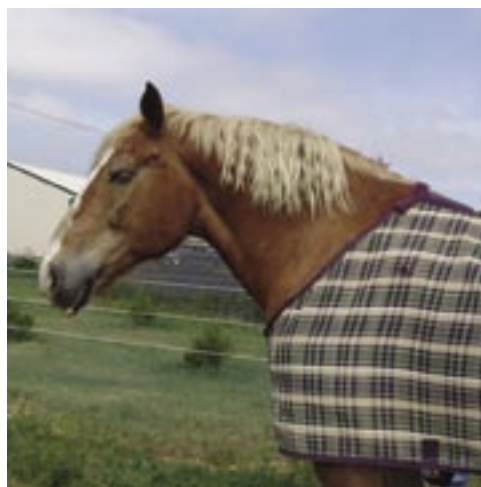
Grazing management plays a key role in sustaining six draft horses on 10 acres, given that it takes 40 acres to support one horse for a year in Campbell County. The 10 acres is divided into two pastures by electric fence. The horses are rotated through the two pastures, and they are allowed to graze for time periods of 1½ to 2 hours per day but only if the grass is taller than 4 inches. This keeps the plants healthy and prevents overgrazing and weed infestation. Draft horses have a slower metabolic rate than saddle horses, making them more susceptible to founder and other digestive disorders. The horses are corraled in the early morning or if the grass is wet to prevent such digestive problems.

Fly control is a top priority in the summer to ensure the health and comfort of the horses, especially considering their tails, which are docked, are their natural defense mechanism against flies. Saunda discovered one of their horses is allergic to

chemical fly control. Biological rather than chemical control is now the major method of fly control on the property. Natural predators to flies are obtained through a mail-order supplier and placed in strategic points on the property such as the barn and wetland area. Stalls are bedded with wood chips. Soiled material from the stalls is spread throughout the dry lot area, allowed to dry, tilled over to allow for more drying and to kill larva, and then scraped up in the fall and sold as compost.

The Phillipses use a no-till drill and reseed their pastures every fall using a range seed mix that contains rhizomatous alfalfa and native grasses. They reclaim the pastures by using a chain link harrow pulled by the draft horses. Lee controls weeds by mowing at the right time of the season rather than using pesticides.

The couple have planted more than 400 trees utilizing the Campbell County Conservation District's seedling tree program in the spring. Saunda utilized the Natural Resources Conservation Service's soil survey and collected a soil sample before ordering trees. The results of that sample showed the soil to be heavy in clay. This encouraged



*The Phillipses own both Percheron and Belgian draft horses.*





*Guineas are used to keep snakes away from the Phillips property.*

Saunda to plant spruce trees because they are better adapted to the clay soil than cottonwoods. Three inches of wood mulch is used to help keep moisture in the soil. This mulch is replaced every two years due to the natural breakdown of the mulching material. Utilizing discharge water from a nearby coal-bed methane well, a sprinkle irrigation system is used to water the trees. A water quality



*A custom hay wagon built by Lee Philips and pulled by the draft horses.*

test is conducted on this well four times a year to ensure guidelines are met.

A water well is shared with three neighboring families. A written agreement outlines water use and practices. The well is tested four times a year to ensure the water falls within recommended water-quality guidelines for human consumption. Test results show that iron levels increase in the fall and decrease in the spring, while sodium content fluctuates in an unpredictable pattern.

Living in the country is always a challenge no matter what landowners' interests are. There are always new and ongoing projects. Saunda's current projects include more soil reclamation, composting of the manure, and planting shrubs along the property line for a windbreak. Meanwhile, Lee will fabricate a seeder to use with the draft horses. If they had it to do over again, the Phillipses would only change one thing – they would plant their trees first or at least plan the location of the trees with the building process.

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