

Distinguished Alumnus

GARY DARNALL

In Nebraska and Wyoming, alumnus Gary Darnall and his family's historic Darnall Feedlot are nothing short of legendary. Located near Harrisburg, Neb., the property was homesteaded by the Darnalls in 1889. Gary Darnall used his University of Wyoming bachelor's ('60) and master's ('62) degrees in agricultural economics to take the ranch and feedlot to the next level of innovation. The ranch participated in trials, tests and studies—including natural resource sustainability and water conservation—and became one of the first feeders to adopt integrated pest management and no-till farming. Starting with 150 Hereford cows and 1,400 acres of pasture and dryland, the ranch has

grown to several thousand acres of grassland, dryland and irrigated cropland, a commercial Angus cow herd, a yearling grazing operation and a 22,500-head commercial American Angus Association-certified feedlot.

"Only 5 percent of all feedlots in the U.S. have a capacity of 1,000 head or more," says UW College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Dean Barbara Rasco. "This places Mr. Darnall's operation in the top ranks of his industry. His operation feeds cattle from seven Western states. This alone is a testament to his success."

Darnall has dedicated his life not only to growing his operation but also to sharing his knowledge to further the industry. He helped start the University

of Nebraska-Lincoln Panhandle Research Feedlot; served on the external advisory board for UW College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and many other boards and commissions; gives workshops and hires college interns; and is a staunch supporter of UW athletics, including the Steer-A-Year scholarship program. Darnall and his ranch have earned many state and national honors, prompting the governor of Nebraska, Pete Ricketts, to write a recommendation letter for Darnall's UW Distinguished Alumni Award.

"Gary has done what many only hope to do—growing Darnall ranch into an expansive agricultural operation," Ricketts writes. "His innovation, standard of excellence and service to his community set a strong example of hard work. Gary has spent his life committed to the continued education of students in both Wyoming and Nebraska."

"I am very honored and humbled to have received the Distinguished Alumni Award from UW," Darnall says. "The formal education I received at UW gave me a strong foundation to pursue my goals in life."

UW holds a special place for the Darnall family, with three generations of graduates, including Gary, his wife Emilie, their son and daughter—Lane and Lisa—and now three of their grandchildren.

"Some of my fondest memories at UW are from the classes and professors of the College of Agriculture as well as the athletic programming," says Darnall, who was a track and field athlete. He appreciated the dedicated and knowledgeable professors and the camaraderie of his teammates and coaches. This motivated Darnall to stay involved.

"By supporting the College of Agriculture, serving on the advisory board and supporting UW athletics, I hope to give a little back and show my gratitude toward UW," he says. "The future of our country and industry is in our youth."



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