

**25** Malloux Ranch has been breeding good horses for almost 50 years.

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# Smooth *and* Strong

*For nearly 50 years, the  
Mailloux Ranch has been  
raising good Quarter Horses.*

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**Story and photos  
by Andrea Caudill**

MAILLOUX RANCH, LOCATED NEAR VALE, SOUTH DAKOTA, is rich in history. Situated just a few miles from the Black Hills National Forest, and an easy drive from the famed Badlands, its rolling hills and waving grasslands are dappled in Angus cattle and American Quarter Horses, as it has been for decades.

Its owners, Gary and Deb Mailloux (*may-oo*), are themselves approaching the gold anniversary of their marriage; they are ranching on land first homesteaded by their respective grandparents more than 100 years ago; these AQHA Ranching Heritage Breeders are also quickly approaching the AQHA Legacy Breeder mark – an award given to breeders who have registered American Quarter Horses for 50 consecutive years.

The Mailloux Ranch  
sits in the shadow of  
historic Bear Butte.



Both are natives of the Mount Rushmore state. Their main ranch is near Vale, where Gary's grandparents homesteaded, but they also ranch the land that Deb's grandmother first homesteaded near the Belle Fourche river, located about 16 miles east. As if running two ranches isn't enough work, Gary also has a cattle-hauling trucking business.

Gary and Deb have three children.

Their oldest son, Dayne, is an electrician living near Rapid City, and comes home to help with ranch work whenever he can.

Son Dustin and wife Melissa also live in Rapid City, and have children Aubrey, 11, and Nathan, 9. Dustin works at a cement plant while Melissa is a radiology technologist.

Gary and Deb's daughter, Amanda, and husband Scott Sheeler, and their children, Lexie, 14, Braylee, 11, Keion, 9, and Laney, 3, live only a few miles away in Vale.

The Sheeler family farms, and when they come out to the ranch, the kids are usually quick to find a horse to ride. There are quite a few to choose from, and the impetus for that comes from Deb.

## The Horses

THE GOOD-HUMORED PAIR TELL THE STORY of how they got horses.

"I was a horse nut from the minute I hit the ground," Deb says with a laugh. "My dad was not fond of horses. I was an only child, and I begged and pleaded, and rode old horses that were around on the ranch. They would buck, they wouldn't rein, but I rode them anyway, because I loved to ride.

"Poor Gary, when we got married, he ended up with me and a bunch of horses," she says.

Gary notes that his mom, too, was a horse nut, but there was a point that his family only had one sorrel mare on their place.

"Then when Debbie come along, yep – things changed," he says.

Her first registered Quarter Horse was Ropett's Bar, a 1963 King-bred granddaughter of Bartender.

Deb and Gary officially began breeding in 1972, and in that time have bred more than 400 horses. This year they will foal out a little more than 20 babies.

Most of those will be sold as weanlings, but a few will be retained, either as replacements for broodmares or as ranch horses.

There is a lot of work to be done for the ranch horses at the Mailloux Ranch. The couple run a commercial herd of about 400 head of primarily black Angus cattle. They calve in mid-March, and sell calves off the Vale ranch in the fall, but they also winter the calves on the Belle Fourche property and sell those in January. They also run yearling heifers, and sell bred heifers in the fall.

The horses are used regularly for ranch work – checking cattle, moving pastures, and the usual cattle work of rounding up cattle, doctoring and branding.



A mix of cow horse and running blood produces thick, solid ranch horses.



The horses run on rolling hills covered in rich grass.

"And if we ever can sneak away, we'll maybe go for a trail ride in the Black Hills," Deb adds.

The horses live out on the ranch. The stallions are run together in the winter, then they're all divided out with their mares for breeding season. The mares are pasture bred and, for the most part, foal out in the pastures.

The Maillouxes buy their ranch stallions, but most of their mares are homebreds and are selected from the start for the traits they want in their horses. All of the stallions and most of the mares are started and ridden, Gary notes, before they join the breeding stock.

## The Bloodlines

WHEN YOU LOOK OVER THE HORSES RESIDING AT MAILLOUX Ranch, you notice stout, balanced and strong horses.

"Most of our horses are ranch horses. They're using horses," Deb says. "But we're looking for the versatile horse with a good mind, good bone, they *have* to have good bone. A good mind is essential. Something you can do multiple arena events on, and then come home, round up cattle, rope, drag and brand."

They are good sized, most standing 15-16 hands and weighing 1,200-1,300 pounds.

"They're very smooth and very athletic, even for their size," Deb says. "Even the big ones, they're fun to ride and easy to ride."

The Maillouxes have focused on crossing cow-bred bloodlines on speed bloodlines to produce this ideal ranch horse mix.

Among the mares grazing their pastures are two own daughters of the legendary South Dakota stallion Frenchmans Guy, as well as mares carrying the blood of famous stallions Frenchmans Fabulous, Shining Spark, Colonel Freckles and Top Moon.

"Most of these mares we raised ourselves," Deb says. "We raised, liked, and kept them – and bought different studs (to cross on them.)"

Their first stallion was the gray North Dakota-bred stallion Keen Keg, a grandson of Me Quick To and a great-grandson of Pat Star Jr foaled in 1979.

In 1987, they acquired a black yearling colt by the name of Bob Drifter Coulee from breeder Robert Erickson of Alexandria, North



Mailloux-bred Peps Gotta Frenchman and owner Sammy Ryan turn a cow on the fence at an AQHA Ranching Heritage Challenge.



Deb and Gary Mailloux have raised good horses for 47 years.

Dakota. The Blondy's Dude, Leo and Chesty McCue-bred stallion served them well, siring 17 crops of foals before he died at age 23.

"We kept a lot of his daughters," Deb notes.

To cross on those daughters, they acquired the buckskin stallion Gotta Sweet Leo, a War Leo and double-bred Gay Bar King. They saved some of those daughters, too.

Another early stallion was Peppy Dunit Special, a successful reining and working cow horse grandson of Mr San Peppy.

They currently have a handful of stallions to use for fresh crosses on their mares, including two stallions from Mike and Martha Armitage's A Bar Ranch at Claremore, Oklahoma.

One is the bay roan stallion Cowboys Shinin 811, a son of Seven S Toronado out of the Smoke Fifty mare Smokes Roan Gal. He is a grandson of Shining Spark, and is Mr Gun Smoke bred on the bottom.

"We've crossed him very successfully with those daughters," Deb says.

The other is the 2014 buckskin Cowboys Boon A 411, who draws from the blood of Boonlight Dancer, Doc's Prescription and Shining Spark.

Other stallions include the gray Hickorys Cash Wheel, who traces to Peppy San Badger, Doc's Hickory, Miss N Cash and Colonel Freckles; YO Easy Onapepto, a black grandson of Peptoboonsmal with a mix of Haidas Little Pep, Dash For Perks and Blondy's Dude close up in his pedigree; and True Sparks A Flying, another black stallion by the Dash For Perks stallion Smoke N Sparks, who is from the immediate female family of racing world champion JRC Callas First (who earned \$631,076 in his race career).

## New Homes

THE MAILLOUXES MARKET THEIR HORSES AT several sales. They have been involved with the Ranchers Quarter Horse Breeders Association for its entire 19-year history. This year, the sale is August 25 in Belle Fourche. They also consign horses to the Powder River Quarter Horse Breeders Association sale, which this year is the first weekend of September in Broadus, Montana; and at the NILE sale in Billings, Montana, in mid-October.

The breeders find good homes for the horses, most of whom go to ranches, pleasure riding, rodeoing and showing.

They have had a number of horses earn AQHA points and awards, including Drifters Blue Star, Cowboys Desire, Smokes Gotta Gal, Wheeling Dakota, True Docs A Flying, Smokes Ugo Girl and Peps Gotta Frenchman.

At last year's NILE yearling futurity, which is open to horses that go through the sale and involves both conformation and a round pen performance class, they had two horses place in the top four out of a field of about 20.

"So they can halter, although really they're bred to be



The horses at Mailloux Ranch are raised in herds and allowed to grow up as horses.

working horses," Deb notes.

But for now, another new crop of babies is arriving under the warm late spring sun.

"The mares are all going to start to pop," Deb says. "So that's exciting."

It's the best time of the year for an American Quarter Horse breeder. 🐾

*Andrea Caudill is editor of the Ranch Horse Journal. To comment, write to [acaudill@aqha.org](mailto:acaudill@aqha.org). Visit the Maillouxes website at [www.maillouxqh.com](http://www.maillouxqh.com).*