

## CHAIN LAND & CATTLE COMPANY WINS TOP ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

Washington, D.C. (June 29, 2004) -- Ralph and Darla Chain, owners of the Chain Land & Cattle Company in Canton, OK, have been selected as regional winners of the 2004 Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP). The family is one of seven regional winners nationwide. The prestigious annual award program recognizes cattle producers across the nation whose stewardship practices are inventive, cost-effective and contribute to environmental conservation. In its 14th year, the program is sponsored by Dow AgroSciences L.L.C and the Natural Resources Conservation Service of USDA and is administered by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). The Chain family is the sole representative of NCBA's Region IV, which includes Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas. They were nominated by the Oklahoma Beef Council.

This award honors the overlooked environmentalists, explains Megan Tipton, coordinator of the program. People who spend their lives working the land embody the true nature of conservation and for this Oklahoma family, Earth Day is every day. Ranching is a lifetime spent outdoors, working with natural resources. The Chain family demonstrates how today's landowners utilize creative technologies and innovations to run a profitable, environmentally-friendly business.

Located near Canton, the Chain Land & Cattle Company has been in the family for six generations and has always been distinguished by the special care its owners take to preserve and manage local wildlife. The ranch breeds more than 2,500 cows and heifers each year, which includes 500-600 mother cows on the Medicine Lodge, Kansas Ranch that are bred to top Angus Bulls. They also run a purebred Limousin cow herd, bred to Red Angus bulls, producing a cross-bred bull to be used on their commercial cow herd. All of their raised and purchased calves are marketed through Coleman's Natural Beef in Denver, CO.

This area of Oklahoma's landscape has the unfortunate heritage of having highly erodible land, says Micah Unruh, Director of Communications for the Oklahoma Beef Council. The Chains recognized the importance of maintaining soil and have worked hard for more than 100 years to maintain a profitable ranching operation. Their grassland flourishes and has provided the basis for improved wildlife populations.

The Chains have worked extensively with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to develop an effective wildlife management program. Through leased hunting, the Chains have been able to turn the problem of increased wildlife populations into an opportunity. The Chain Ranch manages its wildlife through selective harvest, population inventories, and habitat enhancement.

Additional stewardship practices include a comprehensive brush control program, which includes prescribed burning to control the spread of eastern red cedar on the ranch. This program is adjusted to fit the differing landscapes found on the more than 60,000 acres of Oklahoma and Kansas. This management program has been featured on several ranch tours, demonstrating to other producers the importance and practicability of environmental stewardship.

If it can grow trees, it can grow grass, explains Ralph Chain.

The Chains are acutely conscious of their family's history and the history of the area. To that end, the Chains have worked persistently to control the spread of eastern red cedar, a growing problem in Western Oklahoma and Southern Kansas. The Chain Land and Cattle Company has been a leader in this respect and in conservation in general.

Accepting challenges and working to build a better future for our children and grandchildren is as much a part of our job as is improving our stock and protecting our natural resources, says Ralph Chain. Therefore, we must become educators and share the story of our industry and our commitment to safeguarding our natural resources and food supply.