



PRINCEVILLE RANCH

CATTLE RANCHING OPERATIONS

Princeville Ranch is one of the oldest working cattle ranches in Hawaii. It spans from mauka (on the mountain side) to makai (ocean side) and from Hanalei to the edge of Kalihiwai Valley. Currently the Carswell family leases and operates the ranch, having started a successful riding stables business in 1978 and later acquiring the cattle operation in 1994.

The ranch's historical roots pre-date those of the American Old West, beginning in 1831 when Richard Charlton, British Consul and Advisor to King Kamehameha II, leased land mauka of Kalihiwai and Hanalei (from Governor Kaikoewa), and brought in 100 longhorns from "Norte California". In 1895, Princeville Plantation was acquired by A. S. Wilcox, son of missionary Abner Wilcox and great great-uncle of Gale Carswell.

Donn Carswell, formerly Project Engineer/Manager for Princeville Corporation from 1969 to 1980, has headed up the cattle operations for many years. He also has served as President of the Hawaii Cattlemen's Cooperative, representing 46 ranchers statewide.

Beginning with his childhood on Oahu, Donn has been a witness and participant in Hawaii's rich ranching history. During family vacations on the Big Island, he remembers seeing paniolos (Hawaiian cowboys) rope steers by the horns and drag them out to small boats. The boats would take them out to ships. Then the steers were lifted aboard for transport to other islands or to the mainland.

Prior to starting the cattle operations, the Carswell family hosted the Hanalei Stampede rodeos in their arena for 12 years. This rodeo was one of the biggest in the state of Hawaii, with cowboys and cowgirls shipping their horses via barges from all over the state to participate. Donn (known to friends and family as Curly), Karin and David paired up with each other to participate in the team roping and other rodeo events.

The family ranching team can often be seen cruising the pastures mounted on horses or ATV's in search of a lost calf or to check on the herd of cows, calves and bulls. Ranching is a lifestyle rather than a job, and it requires being on call 24/7. From calving problems to cattle escaping through fences, when there is trouble on the ranch, the family and their trusty ranch hands are all there to help.

2500-acre Princeville Ranch is a "cow-calf" operation. Cows birth calves each year for both natural and grass-fed beef production. The herd includes 150 Brangus cows, a cross of 5/8 Angus and 3/8 Brahma. The Brahma breed handles tropical heat and humidity, whereas the Angus breed provides a desirable meat quality. The cows are bred by 8 to 10 Brangus or Angus Plus bulls carefully chosen based on their production statistics. For example, a bull that produces calves with low birth weights, yet high growth rates, is desirable. The low birth weight is easier for the cow to deliver, yet the high growth rate produces the best yield at market time.

The breeding process is left up to Mother Nature. The bulls simply join the cows for two and a half months from May to mid-July. Cows have a 9-month gestation period and normally produce one calf each year between February and April. Before calves are shipped in November at an average age 8 months, the total herd of cows, calves and bulls numbers around 400 animals.

In cattle ranching, pasture management is a critical issue. The Carswells originally had their grass tested for nutritional content. The pastures have to be mowed and cleared regularly to keep down weeds as well as invasive trees and bushes. There are seven pasture sections which are used in regular rotation approximately every 5-10 days.

Cattle ranching on Kaua'i's spectacular North Shore can seem idyllic, but it does come with its challenges! Just keeping track of close to 400 animals spread over hundreds of acres is a daunting task. The weather is always unpredictable. If there is an extremely wet year, it affects pasture conditions and makes many areas very slippery. Every calving season there are usually one or two rescues that take place. A calf might get caught in the thick Hawaiian uluhi fern or in a deep stream bed. Oftentimes ropes must be lowered to pull calves to safety, while trying to keep the protective mama cows away, to prevent trampling. Due to the watchful eyes of the Carswells and their staff, the herd is well taken care of.

One of the rewards that mitigate the challenges is the community of local ranchers that support each other. At branding time, cowboys and cowgirls from various ranches come to help each other, with some rewarding grinds (food) and celebrating at the end of a tiring day. At Princeville Ranch, the brand used is the W with a small cross sitting atop the midpoint of the W. This is the original Wilcox brand, dating back to 1895, reflecting Gale Carswell's heritage. Prior to 1895, the HP brand of Hanalei Plantation was used (beginning in 1853) by Robert Wylie, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Each year's crop of calves is separated into three major categories. Most of the males and a small number of females are selected to be sent to the Pacific Northwest, where they will spend the next seven months in pasture and then three months in a feedlot in Boardman, Oregon. Princeville Ranch retains ownership and feeds the animals a natural vegetarian finishing ration with very little grain. Antibiotics and growth hormones are prohibited.

Shipping cattle to be finished on the mainland is a common practice in Hawaii. Most ranches do not have enough pasture or the right type of grass for finishing. Carrying capacity is the issue. Grass-finished beef takes 24-30 months, while feedlot-finished beef takes only 17-20 months. Those who also

maintain cow herds, such as Princeville Ranch, have an even greater challenge in ensuring enough quality grass just for the cows and so, must ship their calves to other locations.

The second group of cattle - one half of the calves - is kept on the ranch to go into the makai (ocean side) and Hanalei pastures to become grass-fed natural beef. The grasses in Hanalei are higher in protein and more suited to grass-finishing than the pastures on the upper sections of the Ranch. The third group is the replacement heifers - the young females who will someday become moms in the herd. They are chosen for their appearance, temperament, health and physical suitability for delivering calves.

The super-healthy beef had been sold on Kaua'i for many years under the brand *Princeville Pride*, selling out in just a few hours. Adding in the recent global trend to "eat local," demand continued to far exceed supply.

In 2010 the Carswells joined with Walter Kortschak, owner of the neighboring ranch in Kilauea called Jurassic Kahili Ranch. Like the Carswells, he had always shipped his cattle to the mainland but preferred to keep the cattle on island. The two ranches also have other important assets in common. First, they both use low stress handling of their cattle. Second, they continue to improve herd genetics for better meat quality.

Due to the combined pastures of the two ranches, about half of the cattle now remain on island for finishing. Local companies Medeiros Farms and Andrade Slaughterhouse are able to process the beef, which has increasing the supply by 50% from four to six animals per month. The goal for May 2011 is eight animals per month, with eventually all the beef finished and processed on Kaua'i.

A new name and logo were developed to more accurately describe the program -- *North Shore Kaua'i Beef*. This name highlights both the Kaua'i origins of the beef as well as its more specific locale on the idyllic North Shore. The logo features a mountain range called Namahana -- the stunning range that spans behind both ranches. The distinctive brands of both ranches also are prominent.

North Shore Kaua'i Beef currently supplies the Namolokama North Shore General Store in Princeville and in Kilauea, Healthy Hut and Kilauea Town Market. Hanalei outlets are The Dolphin Fish Market and Harvest Market. In Kapa'a the beef is available at Papaya's Natural Foods. *North Shore Kaua'i Beef* also has supplied The Kilauea Bakery and The Kilauea Fish Market when they have run beef specials.

The scenic beauty of the open pastures and dense foliage of Princeville Ranch is a testimony to the value of agriculture in preserving open space, view planes and natural beauty for both visitors and residents. Raising highly prized natural beef matches consumers' desire for healthy fare from 'green' endeavors. Responding to the "eat local" movement is also rewarding. Finally and equally important, *North Shore Kaua'i Beef* provides a sustainable ranch operation for generations to come.