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Volume 17, Issue 2



**KING RANCH<sup>®</sup>**  
**INSTITUTE**  
**FOR RANCH MANAGEMENT**  
**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-KINGSVILLE<sup>®</sup>**





## From the Director

Dr. Clay P. Mathis  
Director & Robert J. Kleberg, Jr. &  
Helen C. Kleberg Endowed Chair

### Brush Management: A Long-Term Approach

The KRIRM model for developing excellent ranch managers is founded upon a learn-by-doing approach requiring students to complete multiple case studies for partnering ranches. The projects are designed to solve problems for the ranches we serve, and to provide hands-on discovery opportunities for our students. Over time, some similar themes have surfaced. The most prevalent theme...brush management. We all know that invasive species like mesquite, huisache, juniper, prickly pear, and others compete for soil nutrients and reduce the production of higher succession forages preferred by wild herbivores and livestock. Yet, control of brush and invasive species is never a one-time control measure, but requires long-term commitment. This management challenge can be daunting.

There is no doubt, throughout much of our great country, brush management is a perennial challenge for ranch and natural resource managers. Not only is understanding available options for effective control important, but also predicting the outcomes and cost effectiveness of control measures.

Thanks to sponsorship from Corteva Agriscience, KRIRM is offering a new lectureship, *Brush and Invasive Species Management September 24-25, 2021*. This lectureship has been designed to dive deeply into the most important decisions a manager must make regarding brush management strategies and tactics. The key takeaway for this lectureship will address the continuous need for brush control and how to balance management decisions that are equally beneficial to the wildlife and domestic livestock on our rangelands. Along with that balance comes the awareness of the associated economic and ecologic risks involved.

A line up of the industry's top experts will examine the full complement of brush management tools to achieve effective control and cost measures for the Southern Great Plains region. The lectureship will expand in the areas of brush control challenges, development of brush management plans and goals, expenses and budget limitations, legal considerations, and unintended consequences of herbicide use. Also presented will be King Ranch's perspective on navigating ownership expectations, animal enterprises, and more. A lab session will be held on King Ranch that will demonstrate the "tools of the trade" including mechanical, spray, individual plant treatment (IPT), and fire equipment methods.

Even more enticing about this event is the virtual attendance option. You may choose to attend this lectureship in Kingsville, Texas, or online. Classroom instruction will be delivered simultaneously in-person and online while the lab sessions will be recorded and made available to the virtual participants upon the event conclusion.

As managers and stewards of our land and natural resources, we must always be prepared to make decisions with a clear understanding of how those decisions impact the entire enterprise. This lectureship, as well as the other events that we offer throughout the year, provide you with tools and resources to confidently make decisions that impact the sustainability of the ranch and the natural resources that make it thrive. We hope you will join us September 24-25 for this learning opportunity. 🏠

**Learn more at [krirm.tamuk.edu/brush-management/](http://krirm.tamuk.edu/brush-management/)**

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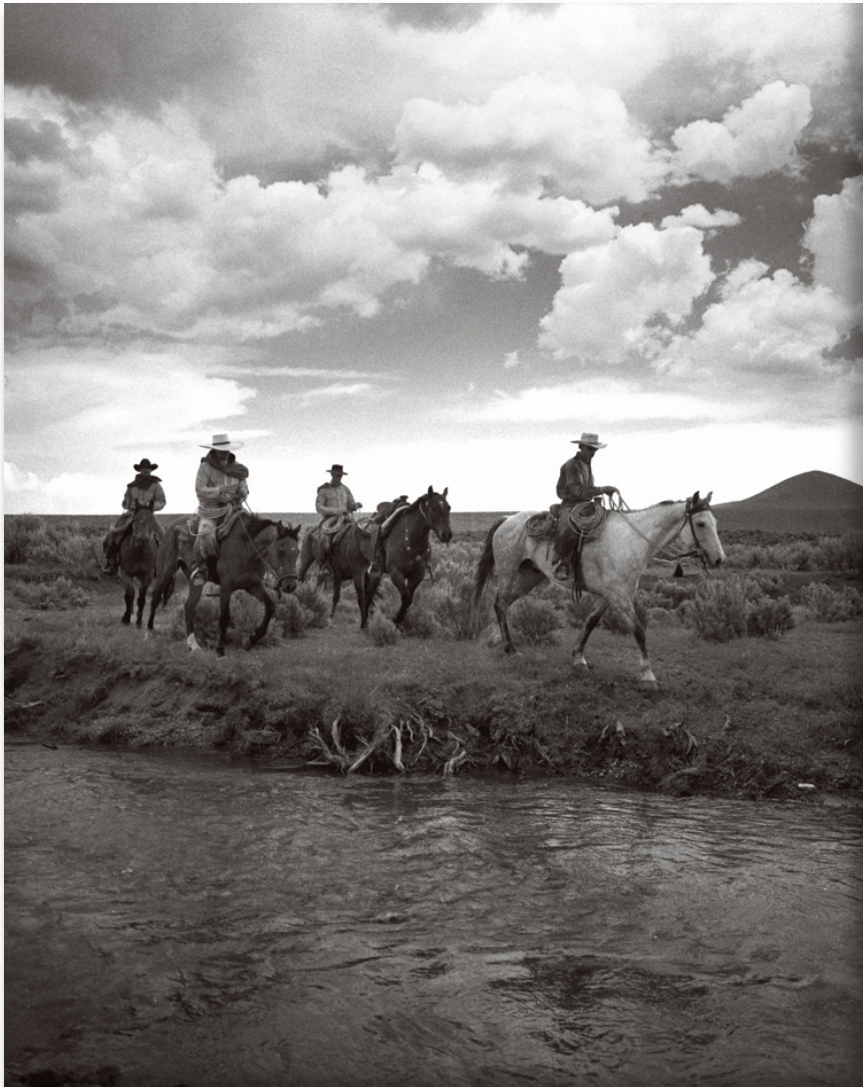
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**“Racing the Clouds”  
Ellison Ranching  
Company Photo  
by Adam Jahiel**

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*Our Mission* **Sustaining our ranching heritage through education, innovation, and outreach.**

*Our Vision* **We are determined to educate leaders who will make a positive difference in ranching and ensure that our hard-earned heritage is not lost.**

*Ellison Ranching photo taken by Adam Jahiel.*



*A Century of*

# *Heritage, Vision, and Family*

By Ashley Patterson

*Reflecting back on a 111-year history of family heritage, hard work, and perseverance, Peter Ellison humbly hopes that Ellison Ranching Company remains alive and thriving to see another 100-year celebration.*

## A Century-Old History

Ellison Ranching Company sprawls across more than two million acres in the Elko and Lander counties of Nevada. Since Peter Ellison's great-grandfather Ephraim P. Ellison founded the ranching operation in 1910, alongside multiple other enterprises he established in Utah and Canada, the ranch has grown to one of the largest cow-calf operations in the United States. In a family history book *To Build, To Create, To Produce. Ephraim P. Ellison's Life and Enterprises, 1850-1939*, published in 1997 and written by William G. Hartley for the Ellison Family Organization, Peter was quoted describing E. P. as “a man of vision” and an “empire builder” who would not spend his later years in life slowing down.

That vision and drive led to the establishment of three ranches and a farming operation in Nevada. Today, the Ellison Ranching Company is headquartered at the Spanish Ranch, and also includes the PX Ranch, 71 Ranch, and the farm Fish Creek Ranch. Operating on 156,000 deeded acres and 2 million acres of federal land with grazing permits from the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service, the cow-calf operation runs roughly 15,000 total head of mostly black Angus cattle (8,500 mother cows) and 8,000 head of Rambouillet sheep. The company also recently invested in a packing plant and owns a feedlot, both located in Idaho.

Peter, who began serving as a director for the ranching company in 1978 and has served as president since 1988, tells of the ranch's history and current businesses with a sense of pride and admiration for the rich history of legacy and work ethic. He explains that the smart, business-minded family members and board of directors helped the company reach its success today by establishing reserves and managing the operation with zero debt. This strategy helped the ranch persevere through the hardships of the Great Depression and everything Mother Nature sends their way.

*View of the Independence Mountains, taken from the Spanish Ranch headquarters.*

“I think the challenges we face are like every ranching operation. We have droughts—and we're in one right now—range fires, cattle prices, bad winters, just the normal kinds of things,” says Peter.

Peter recalls reading minutes from director's meetings dating back to 1910. “They were talking about the very same problems we are.”

But through the hardships, E. P. saw the ranch through to success in the early days, paving the way for the ranch to build on that success and thrive for more than 100 years.

## Today's Ranching Operation

In the National Cattlemen's Beef Association 2020 report of the top 25 largest cow-calf operations in the United States, Ellison Ranching Company came in as number seven, right after Padlock Ranch Company of Wyoming.

Ira Wines, general manager of Ellison Ranching Company, oversees every aspect of the cattle, farming, feedlot, and sheep enterprises, including management of 60 full-time employees and contract hay labor.

Wines began working for the company in 2004 as the Buckaroo Boss at the Spanish Ranch, and moved into his current general manager position in 2017. The greatest challenge facing the ranch right now, says Wines, is the drought. Usually July and August are the hardest months of the year, even when they aren't experiencing a drought, because the cattle must work harder. Adding a drought to the





already hot and dry conditions of the summer makes for a tough situation to overcome, but Wines says they are used to the challenge and is optimistic for a positive future.

The ranch is gearing up for the fall work, which usually begins in September when the crew brings the cattle down from the mountains to wean calves. Using century-old traditions, this looks similar to how the crews worked at the ranch's beginning in the early 1900's, loading branding wagons and gathering a group of calves to work and brand before moving onto the next. Most weaned calves will be sent to the Idaho feedlot in October, while one ranch will winter calves before sending to the feedlot. Cows will be palpated and settled in for the winter; a Bureau of Land Management permit allows the ranch to winter 500 cows and everything else is fed native meadow hay through the winter.

Wines explains that one feedlot raises the ranch's 2,000 replacement heifers and he hopes 1,700-1,800 of those heifers get bred. The other feedlot is used to background steers that will sell in late spring.

"The last few years, we've started finishing some of those steers, retaining ownership of them until they are hanging on a hook," explains Wines. "We're going to try to finish a few more cattle in the future but the drought will slow that process down."

Last year, about 3,700 steers were sent to the feedlot and the ranch finished a total of 1,500 steers and open replacement heifers.

## Genetic Improvements

For the last 10 years, Wines says the ranch has implemented an AI program to improve the genetics of the cow herd. The ranch is capitalizing on hybrid vigor by artificially inseminating straight black heifers to a Hereford bull to produce black baldies.

"Our goal is to still make cows that work in northeast Nevada, but have offspring with performance and growth in feedlot," says Wines.

The ranch also AIs a group of cows specifically to raise bulls that have growth and carcass characteristics but maintain a moderate framed cow. The older cows in the AI group are sent to a packing plant south of Boise, Idaho, with a genetics lab. There, the cow's eggs are harvested and fertilized to make embryos that are transferred to recipient cows to improve the bull battery, says Wines.

"We DNA test the cowherd and the bulls to know exactly what bulls we're making to improve in maternal or growth traits," explains Wines. "We use bulls to complement the moderate cows."

Of all the responsibilities and aspects of Wines' job as general manager, he says he is most excited about the AI program and the recent embryo transfer program. The first calves from the embryo program are on the ground now, and

*Ellison Ranching photo taken by Adam Jahiel.*



*Ira Wines heeling a calf on the 71 Ranch in summer of 2019. Photo by Jim Colyer.*



*Letting horses rest and cows and calves pair up after trailing into the Sand Creek Allotment on PX Ranch. Photo by Stacy Fox.*



*The first Ellison Ranching Company tractor on display at the Spanish Ranch.*

it has been rewarding to see the cowherd genetics improve. “It’s pretty exciting to watch it work.”

Since making these genetic improvements, Wines says they have seen 90% of the steer carcasses grade choice plus. Although he believes they have accomplished their goals and succeeded, he admits they can do better. Wines also enjoys the opportunities to help the crew brand and work calves.

## Time-Honored History


While Peter shares the accolades of the company’s success, noting features in many prominent magazines and newspapers such as National Geographic, Life Magazine, and Wall Street Journal, he also recalls treasured memories from the summers spent as a teenager on the ranch.

“Those were very formative years as a young teenager. One of the most wonderful times of my life was working at the ranch. You’re learning a lot when you’re that age,” he says. “I loved learning to work hard...the people, country, horses, and tractors, I just loved all that stuff.”

Peter is most proud of his family heritage and his great-grandfather E. P.’s entrepreneurial mindset that helped propel the ranch’s success.

“I’m very proud of my heritage. E. P. was a real early entrepreneur in Utah. I’m very proud of the family. That’s been one of the very satisfying parts of being involved for me,” says Peter.

The image of the traditional and storied history of Ellison Ranching Company is best described by Ian Tyson in his song, “Bill Kane,” written about the Spanish Ranch. An image that invokes the legacy and pride of a century-old ranch that continues to thrive today.

*“There’s an old time buckaroo outfit called the Spanish...  
“There weren’t no gooseneck trailers on the Spanish...  
“The big ‘ole crossbred broncs in the Ellison cavy, they would surely take the measure of a man...”* 



# Trio of Trailblazers

*King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management Class of 2023 embarks on their graduate school journey*

By Kindra Gordon

**T**hree students with a passion for the cattle industry are starting their trailblazing journey with the King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM) this fall. Representing the future class of 2023 are Caroline Wild, Belgrade, MT; Bradley Donner, Fort Collins, CO; and Tyler Woodland, Paradise Valley, NV.

Each of them has pursued paths working within ranching and the cattle sector and look forward to the diverse cross-training the KRIRM program offers. Here, they share more about their backgrounds.

## **Caroline Wild**

Wild grew up in Brunswick, Maine, where her parents operated a custom remodeling company. But in spite of not being raised on a farm, Wild had an innate interest in cattle. She recalls attending local county fairs and imagining herself owning her own herd. As a high school junior she joined a beef-focused 4-H club and raised a Belted Galloway steer during her last year of high school. “I haven’t looked back since,” she says.

After one year of college in Massachusetts, she spent a year working for Wolfe’s Neck Farm, helping manage their beef herd, working with interns and assisting with haying. In fall 2014, Wild took the next step toward her beef-focused future

and moved to Bozeman, Montana, to attend Montana State University (MSU) and earn a degree in Animal Science with a concentration in livestock management and industry.

As a result of that experience, Wild says, “The classes I took



*Caroline Wild*



and friends I made at MSU helped me create connections in the agriculture industry, and branch out into the ranching world.” Since graduating, she has worked as the DNA Director at the American Simmental Association, the Assistant Manager at Headwaters Livestock Auction, as well as worked on several ranches throughout Montana.

When she turned her goals toward graduate school, Wild was excited to find the KRIRM program because of its emphasis on a systems approach to managing a ranch, and combination of classes in animal and range science, as well as business and management. “I have experience in many different aspects of ranching, but really am looking forward to combining those skills so I have a more encompassing view,” she shares.

Wild adds, “Ranching is so complex, with managers required to be knowledgeable in many areas. It’s important to be able to balance all those areas to be successful.”

Wild and her 7-year-old rescue dog Moxie have relocated from Montana to Kingsville, Texas. Having grown up near the ocean in Maine, Wild says she is excited to be near the water again at Kingsville. Wild’s hobbies include hiking, yoga, exploring new places, and reading.

As she starts the KRIRM program and looks toward her future, Wild says, “I am really excited to be able to help others with managing land, animals, and people, whether that is through a traditional ranch manager position, or a different type of role.”

## **Tyler Woodland**

Raised on a ranch in central Nevada near Battle Mountain, Woodland grew up with farming roots on both his mom and dad’s sides of the family. He moved with his family to LaBarge, Wyoming, as a high school sophomore. Woodland attended Brigham Young University majoring in ag business, and has worked on ranches in Wyoming, Nebraska, Nevada, and Montana. Most recently, Woodland and his wife have enjoyed working in Paradise Valley, Nevada, for the past two years for Crawford Cattle, a 1.6 million-acre ranch with approximately 6,500 head of cattle.

Looking to further his understanding of ranch management sparked Woodland’s interest in the KRIRM graduate program. A KRIRM alumnus, Tyler Gardner, encouraged him to apply.

Woodland, his wife, and their nine-month-old son have relocated to Kingsville, Texas, and Woodland is eager for the networking opportunities KRIRM offers, as well as improving his skills toward managing people and leadership within the agricultural industry. He enjoys cattle management and horse training.

Woodland says the best advice he’s ever received is to recognize “there are tradeoffs to everything in life.” And, the advice he is most known to share with others is: “It’s hard telling, not knowing.”

Thus, he’s focused on learning and broadening his skills through the KRIRM program.

## **Bradley Donner**

A native of northern Colorado, Donner says he recognized his passion for agriculture at an early age. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business with a focus on Ranch Management and explored a broad spectrum of topics including animal and range sciences, business economics, environmental sciences, and various aspects of the multifaceted grain industry.

Donner notes, “I enjoy the ranching industry’s intertwined relationship between the soil, the plants, the animals, and finances. I believe a great range of knowledge is necessary in



*Bradley Donner*



*Tyler Woodland*

a wide array of areas in agricultural production to be highly successful, and I have a desire to educate myself in all of these areas.”

His previous experiences included working for a grain industry leader and working with multiple ranches in several Western states, including being a unit manager and sole location employee on a first-year, 40,000-acre commercial cattle operation. Donner focused on developing a dynamic, rest-rotation grazing plan to allow for stocking grass for drought years and winter forage as well as reducing animal stress and human labor. “I worked in pursuit of optimizing ranch profits through increases in efficiency of inputs while balancing the available resources,” he explains.

A former KRIRM alumnus knew Donner’s passion for ranching and his interest in improving operational efficiency and continuing education, so they encouraged him to pursue his graduate degree at KRIRM.

Of the program, Donner says, “The KRIRM program brings together thought leaders from various disciplines, and I look forward to learning from their experiences and research in order to bring this knowledge into practice in my career. I look forward to learning, in more depth, the intricacies of the agricultural supply chain to better understand how to best maximize sustainable profits, minimize inputs, maximize outputs and be more knowledgeable of the various bottlenecks and how to mitigate them.”

Donner says his future career focus is to seek out a pivotal role on a dynamic, diversified, and passionate ranching/ farming enterprise where he can apply his skills and knowledge while at the same time learn from their established operations and talent. Ultimately, he sees ranching for the future as a balance between the roots of traditional ranching while adopting the innovations, tools and practices which have the potential

to better the ranching community, the land, animals and environment.

Donner’s hobbies include fly fishing, woodworking, and the cowboy crafts, and he gives credence to the mantra: “Never be complacent and always continue to learn.” He plans to join his fellow classmates in doing just that at KRIRM. 🏠



*Woodland roping calves in Nevada.*



*Wild bringing a new calf to a barn in Wellington, Colorado.*

## What industry challenges does this trio see?

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As they represent the future of the ranching industry, we asked this trio of students what challenges they are concerned about for the ranching and the livestock industries – and what solutions they suggest?

*Tyler Woodland counts the volatility in cattle prices as one of the challenges he has seen impact the ranching and livestock industry firsthand, and acknowledges, “This is a very complex problem to address.” He recognizes that lowering input and overhead costs are always important tactics to help combat volatile prices and margins.*

*Bradley Donner points to the climatic and political pressures as top challenges facing the future of the livestock industry. To this he suggests, “Producers, consumers and activists alike can help solve these challenges through continued education and constructive dialogue. We need to be aware of the positive and negative impacts our industry can have and do our best to minimize the negative aspects while leveraging and emphasizing the benefits of responsible ranching and rangeland practices.”*

*Caroline Wild sees one of the biggest problems currently facing the ranching industry being the changing circumstances – and the continual need to adapt. She explains, “Whether that be different consumer demands, changing environmental factors or new methods of raising cattle, I think one of the best ways to address this is to offer continuing education opportunities much like KRIRM does so that ranchers can stay up to date with new developments.”*



*Donner pictured on horseback in Thermopolis, Wyoming.*

18<sup>th</sup> Annual Holt Cat® Symposium on Excellence in Ranch Management

# *Sustainable Ranching*

**NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND  
EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES**

**October 14-15, 2021 || Kingsville, TX & Online**

In the past, “sustainability” was a relatively simple concept within the ranching industry. It was passing on the ranch to sustain the next generation by taking care of livestock and wildlife and maintaining or improving the natural resources for generations to come. As social interest in food production and environmental health has grown, the traditional definition of sustainability expanded. Today, sustainability is a focal point of discussion for our society as a whole.

The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB) defines sustainable beef as “a socially responsible, environmentally sound and economically viable product that prioritizes planet, people, animals, and progress.” This definition is broad, and thus sustainability is very difficult to measure. The ranching industry will benefit from a deeper understanding of current sustainability-related efforts in ranching and food production, as well as perspectives of producers and consumers.

The King Ranch® Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM) will offer a continuing learning opportunity on this topic at its 18<sup>th</sup> Annual HOLT CAT® Symposium on Excellence in Ranch Management October 14-15, 2021. The symposium, Sustainable Ranching: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Opportunities, will be held as a hybrid event delivered simultaneously in Kingsville, Texas, and online via a Zoom webinar.

“This topic is, and will continue to be, a very important part of ranch management,” explained KRIRM Director and Endowed Chair Clay Mathis. “We’ve designed a forward looking symposium to offer an overview of sustainability, the challenges in front of us, and most importantly insight on how to navigate through those challenges to find opportunities.”

The overview of sustainability mentioned by Mathis will be presented from a systems perspective that examines the topic through a big-picture lens so the ranching industry can find leverage to shape the future. Representatives from the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, Golden State Foods,

KRIRM, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), Texas Agricultural Land Trust, and the Noble Research Institute will also deliver presentations on the first day of the symposium. These presentations will touch on animal welfare, carbon and methane, ecosystems services of ranching, and an introduction to regenerative agriculture.

Presentations will also address metrics for measuring environmental soundness and influencing social acceptance. Attendees will learn about measuring economic viability at the ranch level and how to find opportunity in marketing sustainability. A ranch perspective on a sustainable success story will wrap up symposium shared by Cherie Copithorne-Barnes, CEO of CL Ranches, Ltd. of Canada.

All presentations in Kingsville, Texas, will be simultaneously delivered to the virtual audience via a Zoom webinar.

“We hope this symposium will shed light on the ever-changing landscape of sustainable ranching and offer the latest information on the subject in a way that producers will feel confident in making impactful decisions back home on the ranch,” said Mathis. “We are excited to offer the integrated virtual attendance option so that ranchers, landowners, and professionals can take advantage of this learning opportunity without the need to travel.”

The symposium will include an industry trade show that will be open during the two-day event. Attendees can enjoy an evening social and dinner on October 14 as the 2021 Texas Farm Credit Certificate in Advanced Ranch Management recipients are recognized. The symposium concludes on October 15 with a tour of the historic King Ranch, which will focus on King Ranch’s unwavering dedication and rich history of sustainable ranching.

To view more details and to register, visit [krirm.tamuk.edu/symposium](http://krirm.tamuk.edu/symposium) or call 361-593-5401. Stay in touch with symposium updates by signing up for the KRIRM e-newsletter online and following the KRIRM Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts. 🏠

## Hybrid Event!

*Delivered simultaneously in-person and online!*



[krirm.tamuk.edu/symposium](http://krirm.tamuk.edu/symposium)



## 2022 Outreach Opportunities for Ranchers

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All events count toward the Texas Farm Credit Certificate in Advanced Ranch Management

### Managing the Cow-Calf Business Lectureship

January 12-13, 2022 Sponsored by Merck

Texas A&M University-Kingsville || Kingsville, TX || Online || \$300

### Application of Advanced Genetic Technology in Beef Cattle

February 24-25, 2022 Sponsored by Neogen

Texas A&M University-Kingsville || Kingsville, TX || Online || \$300

### Richard Mifflin Kleberg, Jr. Family Lectureship on Grazing Management

March 16-18, 2022

Noble Research Institute, LLC. || Ardmore, OK || Online || \$400

### John B. Armstrong Lectureship on Systems Thinking

August 1-3, 2022

Texas A&M University-Kingsville || Kingsville, TX || \$400

### Managing Farm and Ranch Employees Lectureship

September 15-16, 2022

Texas A&M University-Kingsville || Kingsville, TX || Online || \$300

Connect with us online for the latest news and updates on the KRIRM program!

