

PORTRAIT OF THE WEST

Beau Huft believes that in ranching there are no deterrents.

Words & photo by Rebecca Colnar Mott.



A cold day shipping cattle with intermittent snow doesn't deter Beau Huft from helping family friends. The Miles City cowboy has spent his life working cattle and breaking tough ranch horses on his family's place south of Montana's historic cowtown.

"I started riding hard when I was seven or eight years old, and ranching has always been part of my life," says the bearded Beau, who currently divvies up his time working at Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Station and the Miles City Livestock Commission sale yard, along with day-working for friends, caring for his own cattle, training horses and renovating a recently purchased farmstead.

The 37-year-old embraces hard days on the range, cranky cattle and feisty young horses. He loves ranching.

"You're free to be outside, alone if you choose, and no day is ever the same. Helping friends lets me see how

other people handle their cattle."

Calving marks Beau's favorite time of year, because it's exciting seeing new life, and he admits, "I enjoy the steadiness of it, the craziness of it, and it's a great way to teach my kids about life."

The methods of moving cattle and breaking horses continues to change, but Beau believes that to stay in ranching you have to be willing to evolve.

"There's more and more paperwork, more need for data," the cowboy says. "Still, I wouldn't trade it. I hope my family and I can ranch for a long, long time." ■

Rebecca Colnar Mott is a first-generation rancher, public relations professional and freelance writer who spends plenty of time "border crossing" between Sheridan, Wyo., and Custer, Mont.