

# 7P Ranch is sold on Simmental

by **MINDI MIKULA**  
Country World  
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In Smith County, in the small rural town of Winona, stands a frame house on a wide expanse of land that stretches as far as the eye can see. Over the years, the historic plantation has grown from 550 acres to 2,000 acres. Since 1972, it has been home to the Prud'homme family and 7P Ranch, best known for their

Simmental cattle.

Dr. Joe Prud'homme, 71, did not begin with the Simmental breed. He started in 1951, at the age of 14, with a small herd of Brahman cows which he halter broke. This FFA project blossomed into a lifelong love for cattle.

Prud'homme, though a Lone Star Farmer and FFA'er in school, did not have a substantial ag background outside of FFA and calf-roping.

"I had worked cattle one summer. They had cattle in the bottoms, what was destined to be Toledo Bend Lake, and we had to remove them — just me, another man and the dogs," remembered Prud'homme.

After finishing school, he decided to move forward with cattle. Prud'homme put an Angus bull on his Brahman cows and raised them until 1963, when he sold the Brahman. Though his professional life eventually forced him to sell the herd, he was determined to one day have a thriving operation again.

Prud'homme relocated to Tyler in 1968 and purchased the ranch in 1972. He initially appreciated the Simmental breed due to their size, easy disposition, and the fact they produced both milk and meat.

"They're growthier than Herefords and give milk, all with a good disposition," said Prud'homme of the breed.

Today, the herd consists of 450 head of Simmental, along with 250 head of Brahman, mostly grey, not counting the calves or heifers.

The 7 Ranch, named after the



Dr. Joe Prud'homme, above, feels that contrary to the advertisement of some breeds that downplay the value of hybrid vigor, that it is a prime reason to put black Simmental bulls against commercial cattle. -- Photo by Mikula

Prud'homme clan, which included Prud'homme, his wife Mary, and their five children, caters to the commercial cattleman. They are dedicated in all aspects of the ranch including grass farming, breeding techniques, and forage.

"We plant 900 acres using cereal rye, TAM-90, rye grass and overseed the coastal meadows," said Prud'homme.

The last several years Prud'homme has used Purina feed limiters with forage because of drought conditions. The process began because of severe drought during which time they used gin trash when hay was prohibited.

With the price of fertilizer

-- Prud'homme --  
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# ❖ Prud'homme

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continually rising, Prud'homme is now also using patchy clover over all areas not overseeded to help with costs.

The 7P Ranch participated in the Forage Testing Program through Stephen F. Austin University for 20 years. "We still utilize that info to develop bulls on high forage rations so not to develop 'little fat bulls' that dissolve when you sell them," he said.

Prud'homme believes his biggest challenge was starting out initially trying to overcome the influence of the showring Simmentals.

"Simmentals were actually too big," explained Prud'homme. "Even some of the early breeds in adjoining states started breeding up from a Holstein basis."

The complaint commercial cattlemen had about Simmental being too big and not holding up might have been justified in those instances, but it has changed dramatically over the years.

The 7P Ranch has used artificial insemination and embryo transfer since 1975. Though he isn't currently practicing artificial insemination and embryo transfer, he plans to do so when fea-

sible. Prud'homme has used moderate frames of 5 - 5.5 and occasionally 6 in their AI program for the last 15 years.

"What we've done essentially is taken full-blood cattle and middle and milk, and bred to non-diluter, non-spotter moderate frame purebred bulls and we bred them, their offspring, to black moderate-frame Simmental bulls to get black Simmental which we feel have more performance than those bred up from Angus," he said.

Prud'homme believes cattlemen can benefit from the use of Simmentals in their herd.

"Simmental bulls now have tremendously accurate EPDs for calving use. It has been my experience when comparing EPDs that no breed has an EPD any better than the EPD of the Simmental breed. They are second to none," he stated.

Prud'homme feels that contrary to the advertisement of some breeds that downplay the value of hybrid vigor, that it is a prime reason to put black Simmental bulls against commercial cattle.

"If you have calving ease and hybrid figure and 50-

100 pounds more weaning weight, their position is pretty much a no brainer," he added.

Prud'homme believes that from a management standpoint, palpating cows are one of the most important things a rancher can do to avoid barren cows. Because they use artificial breeding, they know when they're bred. Prud'homme boasts 1,000 palpates a year himself, which is not to say he has 1,000 head but that many are palpated twice. He adds that they have a vet do palpation for sales while his palpation is strictly for management purposes.

Despite the massive stretch of land and respected reputation, Prud'homme maintains a simple standard of living. While raising five kids, he was determined to keep his standard of living average.

"The boys worked here from the age of 12 until they went to college," said Prud'homme. He feels their modest existence has instilled important values in the children. He downplays any advantages of what one might expect a doctor's life to be.

"I've been in the cow business longer than I've been a doctor," Prud'homme said modestly.



Prud'homme believes cattlemen can benefit from the use of Simmentals in their herd. --Photo by Mikula

The ranch is still a family business with Prud'homme's wife, Mary, working as business manager and daughter, Sheila, as their marketing manager, with help from their ranch manager, Bryan Mason and his wife Carrie, both graduates of Stephen F. Austin.

The ranch stands behind their bulls. The production of commercial bulls is real and reproducible, according to Prud'homme. They work hard at soundness and believe in the quality of their herd.

"I can look somebody in the face and tell them I can make them money with a Simmental bull."

And looking somebody in the face and being able to be completely confident

about your product is what has earned 7P loyalty. Prud'homme can't say enough about the 'real' and special people he has met in the cattle business that have become friends. He adds that he could not have done it without the Don Parkers, Tommy Goodwins, and Dr. Charles Lang's of the business.

Their goal for the future remains to 'try and break even' as Prud'homme says. The 7P Ranch will continue to utilize what they have built. They plan to at 7P and breed cattle that will work, continue with moderate frames, fertile bulls and focus on calving ease.

To find out more about 7P Ranch, visit [www.7PRanch.com](http://www.7PRanch.com).

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