



Menges Ranch

Dear Arizona Farm to Football Students,

Hello, we are Ben and Ashley Menges from the Menges Ranch! We are so excited that you are participating in this amazing Arizona Farm Bureau Agriculture in the Classroom program. We have a deep love for the land and a passion for sharing our agriculture story, we look forward to telling you a little bit about our ranch and what we do.



Ranching is more than a job; it is a way of life that is rooted in tradition and passion! Our family ranching history goes back more than 200 years. Both of our ancestors ranched in Texas and New Mexico before settling in Arizona. Ben is a 5th generation rancher and is the 2nd generation to work on the ranch that we currently live on. Our ranch is a family business, we work alongside Ben's parents Jeff and Suzanne. With little hired help Jeff and Ben run the ranch and its daily operations.

Jeff was raised on the Smoothing Iron Ranch near Glenwood, New Mexico. From an early age he knew that all he wanted to do was ranch. He attended New Mexico State University where he earned a degree in range management and animal science. After college he worked as a ranch manager, until he was able purchase the ranch that we are on in the early 80's. Jeff is an inspiration to us all, he is dedicated, hardworking, passionate, and knowledgeable about the ranching industry. One of the unique things about Jeff is he hasn't held another occupation but a rancher, and he didn't inherit a ranch.



Ben and his brother Luke Shipping Day 1998.



Jeff Menges horseback working cattle.



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The Menges Ranch is located on the east side of the state in Graham and Greenlee Counties. Most of our ranch land is public and is leased from the Bureau of Land Management. In the Southwest it is very common to have ranches with a mix of private, state, and federal land. 87% of Arizona land is either owned by the federal or state government, with most of Arizona ranches having some form of public land. Ranching is very

important to the management of these public lands. We pride ourselves on being stewards of the land, raising our cattle while caring for the environment and wild animal species located on our ranch. We want to leave the land better for the next generation. As a public land rancher, we can produce a food source from land that only produces vegetation that is inedible for humans and due to his extremely rough nature it is unable to be farmed. For example, one of the things which makes our ranch unique is the amount of rocks on the ranch! We ranch in an area which consists of “malapai” rocks, which means our area was once a volcano!



This partnership between public lands and the American rancher allows for these range lands to be properly managed without an added expense to the taxpayer. Our investments in water infrastructure benefits all the wildlife located on our ranch including kudamundi (called a Mexican racoon), deer, elk, mountain lions, quail, javelin, and big horn sheep.

Ben spends over 150 days on the back of a horse, which makes him very connected to the land and very hands-on with day-to-day operations. Aside from working cattle other ranch tasks include building fence, laying water pipe, putting out salt licks for all cattle and wildlife nutrition, and most importantly checking waters. Every day is different, with new challenges, but working on the land is extremely rewarding.

Our practices have changed over time due to innovation and technology. We run a significant portion of the ranch on solar power. We use electronic identification ear tags which can be scanned, so you know which cow comes from which ranch! We have remote sensors in our water tanks which tell us how full the tank is. We



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can even check how much it rained on our phones using an app called Bushel Farm. As a rancher you must be determined and resourceful! Our biggest assets on the ranch are our horses! We work our cattle completely horseback, the views on the back of a saddle are beautiful. Our crew of horses and dogs are our best friends, as we spend a lot of time together!

Ashley in the branding pen.



With a ranch to take care of we stay very busy! Not only does Ashley work on the ranch, but she also works as a local 4-H Agent in Duncan at the Greenlee County Extension office. Both of us grew up in the 4-H program, Ben was also involved in FFA where he served as a State Officer. From an early age we have enjoyed leadership roles, we are both very active in the Arizona Farm Bureau, Arizona Young Farmers and Ranchers, and Arizona Cattle Growers.

So, we invite you to learn more about the agriculture stories and history that Arizona has to offer. We look forward to our time together and can't wait for you to see our ranch.

Sincerely,

Ben & Ashley

Ben and Ashley Menges

