



First Snow

Photos and words by Larry Turner.

I love the first snows when the earth becomes white, simple, and elemental," says rancher Sue Fairclo House of Poe Valley, Ore. "Feeding stock while my husband, John, drives the truck during a gentle snowfall makes my world perfect. The smell of the alfalfa, the sound of calves and cows chewing on the flakes, the fresh, brisk air—this is all poetry to me. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

She pauses. "Well, slowly sipping from a good bottle of Argentinian red wine on the edge of the western pampas might be right up there, too," the 50-year-old rancher says with a laugh, recalling two memorable trips to the land of gauchos.

Winter on the Fairclo Ranch is less hectic than other seasons. "It's a different chain of chores," she says. "We feed once a day. We chip ice so that the stock can water. No pastures to irrigate, therefore I get more home time in our ranch house."

Sue's grandfather, George Stevenson, purchased the ranch in 1940.

The Fairclo Ranch occupies nearly three miles of Lost River—which Zane Grey mentioned in "Forlorn River"—in the Klamath Basin. While her two brothers pursued other careers, Sue stayed in ranching. After her graduation from Eastern Oregon State College, Sue took over the ranch and started applying her agricultural business degree.

In winter, Sue says, she likes the snowfalls. "The earth is really romantic-looking. The snow covers any man-made scars on the earth and the junk we humans seem to accumulate.

"I love ranching. I like the rewards of watching spring and summer grass grow and to see cattle fat and happy come autumn. I like seeing things kept healthy." ■

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ABOVE: Sue cuts the twined bales and drops off flakes of alfalfa hay for the cattle while John drives the truck in one of the winter feeding pastures. LEFT: Hamming it up with one of her favorite horses. The barbed wire roll was intentionally placed for framing the photo. OPPOSITE: Sue closes the winter pasture gate following the daily livestock feeding chores.