



# SPOTLIGHT

Growing Beginning Farmers & Ranchers in Wyoming



## 2024 Leigh Stockton

**L**eigh Stockton joined the GrowinG Internship Program eager to deepen his understanding of ranching and explore sustainable agriculture. “I was looking for a summer ranch job in Wyoming and came across this opportunity. It seemed like the perfect fit,” he shared. Over ten weeks, Leigh tackled the challenges of ranch life, learning invaluable lessons in teamwork, sustainability, and adaptability.

One of Leigh’s most significant takeaways was the importance of teamwork. “Ranching isn’t a one-man job,” his host told him during a fire-fighting effort. Whether repairing fences, gathering cattle, or addressing invasive species, he learned that collaboration is key. “Every task I completed—no matter how small—helped the whole ranch function better,” Leigh reflected.

Sustainability emerged as a recurring theme throughout his internship. Leigh saw the benefits of rotational grazing and worked with portable electric fencing to improve pasture management. “It’s simple, affordable, and adaptable—an efficient way to keep the land healthy,” he noted. These experiences deepened his appreciation for balancing productivity with ecological stewardship.

Leigh also valued the hands-on challenges he faced daily. From driving cattle across rugged terrain to spraying weeds and shoeing horses, he developed problem-solving skills. “Not every task is glamorous, but each one is critical to keeping a ranch running,” he said.

The internship also opened doors for Leigh to connect with leaders in the ranching industry. While attending the Wyoming Stock Grower’s Convention, he had a chance to expand his professional network in ways he never imagined. “I had the opportunity to meet not only the state vet and assistant state vet, the brand commissioner, the NCBA President, and a dozen big stockmen throughout the state, but also Governor and First Lady Gordon of Wyoming,” he shared. These encounters further fueled his passion for ranching and underscored the significance of relationships in the industry.

As his internship concluded, Leigh reflected on his journey. “This experience taught me not only the skills I need for ranching but also how to face challenges head-on and learn from mistakes,” he shared. With newfound confidence, practical knowledge, and an expanded network, Leigh is ready to continue his agricultural journey.

*Leigh Stockton*

