

# KNOW THE PRO

Born and raised in the West, Jason Patrick and his family are pursuing new adventures in the East. And they're doing it all from the backs of reined cow horses.

*Interview by Allison Armstrong Rehnberg*

**R**anching is a way of life for Jason Patrick, but it's not all he's ever known. Born into a Colorado ranching family, Patrick learned to ride horses, work cattle and develop the cowboy skills he'd carry with him for the rest of his life. Then, just as he was graduating from high school, everything changed.

"The cattle market in the '80s smoked a lot of people, and we were some of them," Patrick reflected. "[My family] lost the ranch, and I really didn't know what to do or how to regroup. So I became a police officer at age 19."

For the next eight years, Patrick worked in law enforcement—first in Hobbs, New Mexico, and then in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Along the way, he met his future wife, Brandy, who'd grown up riding and showing Western pleasure horses. As with Patrick, Brandy had also pursued a career in law enforcement. The couple met on the job, but their mutual love of horses brought them together.

"About six years into my career in law enforcement, I started training mounted patrol horses," Patrick said. "Then I got back into training horses on the side and decided it was time to go back to ranching. After that, I just kept trying to learn and find out more about being a horse trainer."



COURTESY OF JASON PATRICK

From left to right: Jayden, Jason, Brandy and Jasper Patrick.

That's when he encountered reined cow horses and discovered just how much he had to learn about his new profession. In 2008, Patrick showed at the National Reined Cow Horse Association Snaffle Bit Futurity® in Reno, Nevada.

"I showed two horses and never marked above a 190," Patrick recalled. "I was horrible. And people knew I was horrible and were still nice to me! I decided I liked those people. Those were also the best horses I'd ever seen. I couldn't believe how athletic and willing those horses were. I felt like I'd found the coolest thing ever."

Patrick began riding with reined cow horse trainers located in and around Colorado, including Lavert Avent, Dave Dillman, Matt Koch, E.J. Laubscher, Jack McComber, Darren Miller and Terry Wegner. He soaked up everything he could and trained horses as he went along. Eventually, the Patricks began working out of Whispering Willows Ranch in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. In addition to training horses, the couple built a successful horse breeding program around the stallion This One Time (One Time Pepto x Katie Starlight x Grays Starlight), with the owners of Whispering Willows Ranch. They



also raised their two sons—Jasper and Jayden—there. It didn't take long for the younger Patricks to follow in their parents' footsteps.

"They've been addicted to horses since day one," Patrick said. "Honestly, I'm most proud of my wife and kids and the success they've had in the show pen. Being able to pass on what I've learned to my sons is probably the biggest success I've had in the industry. I'm most proud of watching how good they are at what they do."

In November of 2020, the Patrick family pulled up their Colorado roots and moved to Reading, Pennsylvania, to pursue a new adventure in ranching and training at Sheerlund Farm.

"We call it a 'franch,' because it's always been a farm, but we're working with the owners now to turn it into a working ranch," Patrick said. "I'm teaching a whole new group of kids here and it's really fun. Earlier this year, we had four people show in their first reined cow horse event and then, last month, they won their first checks. It's a lot of fun. I love watching new people find this sport. I'm excited about the opportunities here."

The Patricks plan to spend the next few years building Sheerlund Ranch, but they also want to spend time with their sons.

"We're enjoying seeing a new environment, meeting new people here and building this program, but we also want to spend time doing other stuff with our boys, too," Patrick said. "We raised them in the show pen at cow horse shows, and they'd just as soon keep doing that. But we want to do some other things with them. I bet when they're adults, we'll all meet back in the show pen again. That'll be fun."

Q

A



with NRCHA Pro  
Jason Patrick

***What is the most rewarding part of training horses?***

I like seeing progress. I like when the horse licks its lips and drops its head and you go, "Oh, wow. He understood what I was saying there." I like that feeling when you and the horse have a conversation, and the horse understood what you said and did something really cool with little pressure from you.

***What do you enjoy about teaching and coaching others?***

I enjoy the excitement! In the beginning, everything is something you've never felt before, and it's so stunning and awe-inspiring. That's what it was like when I started riding for the first time, too. I love seeing someone laugh, giggle,

whoop or holler uncontrollably about something they just felt on a horse for the first time, and they didn't know it was possible. I think that's awesome.

***How do you keep your passion and stay fresh without getting burned out?***

I keep changing things. We are always tweaking and learning and trying to do something new. Maybe someone showed you a new little thing, or maybe you saw something in a video, or maybe you saw something that somebody did in the warm-up pen at the show, and you can't wait to go home and see if it works. I like to keep continuing to learn and progress and find new things. Part of what keeps me going is knowing that I certainly haven't got it all figured out. Some of the most successful trainers out there are always talking about learning new things and progressing. I think always trying to get better is what keeps you going.

***What does it mean to you to be able to compete in reined cow horse events?***

I've been so lucky. When I look at all the places that horses have taken me and the experiences I've had, it's just incredible. It's an amazing thing to realize where horses have taken my family and me. We've just been blessed.

***What makes you smile every day?***

I wake up smiling. I look forward to what new adventure is going to be out there because every day is different. 🐾