

HUNTING IS BIG BUSINESS: SURLLES SEES SENSE IN SUPPLY

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Jason Surles has kept a keen eye on the shifting business of agriculture since 2013.

The company for which he works and where he is now a co-owner has been a mainstay of the community for over 45 years. Dilley Feed & Grain was founded in 1976 by a group of ten local producers, and was initially geared predominantly to cattle and hog operations. The business now includes the DF&G Wildlife Supply, and six stakeholders have geared their operation towards whitetail deer.

“Back then, the hog operation was a big deal,” Jason says. “But twenty years ago we began to shift the main focus from feed for cattle to feed for whitetail.”

The mill, which sits on the southern edge of town along the railroad line, consisted of one mixing unit and one pellet mill. Twelve years ago, at the height of the oil boom over the Eagle Ford Shale, Jason and his team decided that expanding the mill was imperative.

“We decided to add a retail side outside of the plant production,” he says. “And that decision came after the CEO of Justin Boots came and talked to us.”

Adding an additional pellet mill, the operation doubled its production from producing eight tons of feed an hour to 15 on the new pellet mill.

“The retail side came because of the local demand that came with the oil field,” the mill owner says. “It started with snake boots in the old existing warehouse.”

As the oil boom strengthened, the need for specialty apparel grew in demand in the rural community. What started as a small makeshift display in the warehouse soon developed into a retail business that has benefited the local community’s economy.

Dilley sits 70 miles between two major cities, Laredo and San Antonio, and the team recognizes that not everyone can make the trek up or down IH-35 to purchase clothing, boots or feed.

“CEO Randy Watson and VP Jamey Morgan were down here on a dove hunt and they actually presented us with the idea,” Jason says. “It was just to start with a couple styles of snake boots.”

Patrons can now find a full line of snake boots, work boots, Western and hunting clothes and accessories. The Eagle Ford boom also opened the door for fire-resistant safety wear.

Jason believes that in addition to operating a successful agricultural business since the late 1970’s, DF&G’s decision to add new focus