

Joe Freeman
Senatobia, Miss.
Products Raised/Grown: Cattle
Size of Operation: 30 Head
In Business Since: 2007
Farm Credit Partner: Mississippi Land Bank
Working with Farm Credit Since: 2003



Whoever said you can't teach an "older" dog new tricks doesn't know Joe Freeman.

The son of Mississippi sharecroppers, Joe spent his early years on a farm, earning his first nickels running errands for the farmer who owned it. He moved to Chicago as a teenager, though, and spent most of his life there, including 40 years working for the White Castle fast-food chain. Despite decades living in urban America, Joe always planned to move back home, and when he retired from White Castle as a regional director in 2006, that's just what he did.

Laying the groundwork for his return, Joe first bought a 20-acre farm in 2003 near where he was born in 1948 and built a home for he and his wife, Rosemary. The Mississippi Land Bank provided financing for that purchase and for the 61-acre ranch he bought three years later.

"Branch Manager Joe Hill has a real love of the land, just like I do," Freeman says. "We're on the same page, so it was a good fit working with him and the Land Bank."

Joe always intended to raise cattle, but first the new ranch needed a lot of work to get ready to support a herd. Joe spent every day clearing bramble thickets, building fences and putting in ponds that would provide drinking water for the herd. He has since built a 30-head herd of cattle, but isn't satisfied yet with his second career: he plans to eventually sell his current herd, a "scrap" herd built with an Angus bull, and buy and raise registered Angus cattle.