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economic downturn, and the Utseys have relied on other ways of making money. “It’s actually the hay operation that’s saved us,” Pia says. Previously the hay business was about one-tenth of the family’s income but it’s become one-quarter.

In addition, nearly every acre the Utseys own has timber on it, and a logging crew works year-round while Jake and his brother, Jeff, manage day-to-day harvest. “My brother markets wood based on market prices, and I look after cutting operations and roadwork,” Jake says.

“We have a rotation of thinning and clear-cutting, depending on price,” he adds. “Price can change the management plan at any time; the bottom line is money.” Conservation management goes hand in hand with timber. “We have a total and constant reforestation plan, including the planting of mast seeding trees—which bear food for game—and constant erosion control,” he says.

Running the hunting operation may be an all-hands-on-deck, 24-7 job, but it has allowed another generation of Utseys to remain on their slice of Alabama land. And, who knows? John Jacob and Gaddy love it here and are interested in the business.

“I hope they’ll stay here with us, but they’ll do what’s best for them and I’m OK with that,” Jake says. “But there is nothing out there better than connections to family through dirt.” **FL**

■ For more information about Water Valley Lodge, visit watervalleylodge.com.



Reliable & Versatile

AT THE 30,000-ACRE WATER VALLEY LODGE, food plots need planting and maintaining; hay needs baling; fields need spraying; and everything from firewood to topsoil needs to be moved around the expansive property. What tractor gets the nod to do the work? Massey Ferguson does, because, says Water Valley owner Jake Utsey, the brand provides the reliability, efficiency and versatility that such a variety of jobs requires.

Massey Ferguson iron has been a constant on the Utsey land for three generations (and counting). “My father did business with Jake’s granddad,” says Jay Chapman, owner of Chapman Tractors out of Waynesboro, Miss. “We also did lots of business with Jake’s dad.”

“We learned to farm on a pair of 135s,” Jake recalls. “My dad always said those were some of the best tractors ever built.”

“The weight and maneuverability of the Massey tractors are a perfect fit for his business,” Chapman says. “He works his tractors pretty hard.” Weighing in at 9,080 pounds and 8,000 pounds respectively, Jake’s

MF4360 and MF4243 are heavy enough to turn the tight corners needed in his operation. The hydrostatic power steering system on the MF4360 allows for that greater control and maneuverability.

Jake uses his MF4243 to cut, move and load hay, pull mowers and disk. His MF4360 is used to cut, bale, spray, drill, mow and disk. Another tractor, an MF390, is a good fit for year-round yard maintenance because of its compactness. “And we’re using our MF275 to rake and to pull quail wagons,” Jake says.

Logging long hours, especially during hunting season, also makes comfort and ease of use a necessity. “I like the visibility and cab comfort; there’s plenty of room in the cab, plus the control placement is comfortable for the operator,” Jake says.

Like his great-grandfather, grandfather and dad, 10-year-old John Jacob is the family’s fourth generation to rely on the efficiency of Massey Ferguson to complete his chores. “The Utseys are Massey Ferguson people,” Chapman emphasizes. “Their blood runs red.”