

MN Agriculture - Cattle Woman Rachel Gray

Rachel Gray is from Blackduck, MN. If you don't know where Blackduck is, you are not alone because I didn't either. It is in the extreme northern portion of Minnesota. I met Rachel at a Minnesota Agri-Women conference and we are both volunteers for CommonGround. She is a cattle woman, in it's truest sense.

My family enjoys beef. If you are looking for more information about beef, how to cook beef and recipes, go on over to [Beef It's Whats For Dinner](#).

Rachel's farm Facebook page is [Little Timber Farms](#).

She runs a beef cow calf operation along with her Dad and Mom. They use intensive rotational grazing practices and grow hay and some small grains. They background their our own calves before sending them to market.

Their farm has been operational since 1935. Her great-grandfather moved from southern Minnesota and began farming at that time. Her grandfather continued to farm until 1972 when her Mom and Dad took over and expanded the operation. They milked cows until 2001 and then transitioned to beef. She began farming full time with my parents in 2012.

They have commercial black angus cross cows and produce calves to be sold at market. They background their calves, which means they train them to eat from bunks after weaning and work with them to gain weight. They typically market calves that are between 700-800 pounds. She is getting into the commercial bred heifer business. The heifers are born on our place and raised here. They AI (artificially inseminate) breed those heifers and are offered for sale as spring calving heifers.

They market their calves at auction in January and sell to feedlots all over the US. The heifers are marketed straight off the farm for other ranchers to use as replacement heifers.

Why do I raise cattle and what went into the decision:

"I have always loved farming. As a young girl growing up on the farm I started driving tractor at about 8 years old. I loved caring for the animals and even the long hours. I went to college in the late 90s and no one was talking about agriculture as a career. I became a teacher and worked summers on the farm. In 2012 I had the chance to begin farming full time with my parents. I decided that it was the perfect opportunity and took it. I began with a small number of heifers from my Dad's herd and started to expand. I made the decision to get into the bred heifer side of things because I enjoy looking at genetics and trying to provide the customer with the best possible cows for our area for their herd."

If there was one thing I could change:

"I would own more land."

An embarrassing farm moment:

"I came home from vaccinating and putting cattle through the chutes one day. My clothes were covered in manure and slop. I really needed to hose them off in the barn before they ever got near the washing machine. I was running late for a meeting and so decided to leave the clothes in the barn and make a break for the house in a t-shirt....I live way out in the country and no one ever drives by. EXCEPT on that day!! There I was scooting across the yard in a t-shirt and muck boots."

I wish consumers knew:

How much care cattlemen and women really put into their animals. I think that people do not realize that farmers are caretakers before anything else. We work diligently to provide the best care for our animals. Sometimes that means being up all night checking cows and calves if the weather gets bad. Sometimes you will walk into the kitchen to find a calf on the kitchen floor, or even in the bath tub. I wish that consumers knew the care, dedication and daily work that goes into raising quality, safe beef.



I think that people not living in Minnesota are:

"Missing out on our seasons. I love the changing seasons. There is something beautiful anytime of year, from the amazing lakes in the summer, to the colors in the fall, a frosty morning in the winter with the trees coated, to spring with new buds on the trees."

An ag related place that people need to know about _____:

"The [Oliver Kelley farm](#). It is a historically accurate working farm. A great place to visit."

Here are a few more pictures from Rachel:

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