

MN Agriculture - The Klinghagens, A Story of Beginning Farmers

Day 11 of my 30 Days of Agriculture is Keith and JoHannah Klinghagen. They are owners of Klinghagen Farms/Klinghagen Trucking LLC. Keith and JoHanna have two children, Cooper (5 yrs) and Maverick (2 yrs) and live in Clara City, Minnesota. Their story is the epitome of the perseverance and determination it takes to be a beginner farmer. It's not easy to start farming. But the Klinghagens have shown that it can be done. Read this great story of a beginning farmer!

The Klinghagens raise sheep, hogs, cattle and run a trucking enterprise (no crops). JoHannah is self-employed with a local hog integrator that she has worked for since she graduated in May 2006. She currently manages 8500 nursery pigs in company owned or leased barns. She receives piglets weaned from the sow at 13 lbs and then takes care of them for the next 6-8 weeks or until they are about 50lbs. Keith manages their 2400 hd grow-to-finish facility they built in 2007 for the same integrator. He receives the pigs she just raised in the nursery (50lbs) and finishes the pigs to 265-300lbs.

Together they take care of cattle and sheep. Since Keith was in high school he has raised Holstein bull calves for meat. They buy groups of calves from local sale barns and/or dairies and raise them in huts for 7 weeks on a milk and grain diet. After 7 weeks they wean and feed them in a feedlot to 500lbs and sell to private buyers to finish for human consumption.

Keith also manages a small fleet of trucks. At first they only hauled sugar beets from the fields to the beet plant for local farmers. Over the years the trucking business grew as they desired to make the trucks more productive all year instead of just during sugar beet season. They have hauled sugar beets, drain tile, straw and hay bales, grain dryers, livestock feed, feed ingredients, and machinery/equipment. Within the last two years they decided to put two trucks over the road (hauling within the United States) and they haul just about anything such as frozen food, dry goods, and cheese just to name a few.

In 2012 they started their flock of sheep. They currently have 55 Polypay ewes they raise for meat. They lamb in March and at weaning of the lambs they determine if they want to finish out the lambs themselves or sell as feeder lambs depending on markets at that time. They keep back so many ewe lambs for replacement ewes every year to continue to grow the flock.

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"Keith had started with Holstein bull calves when he was in high school and continued through college. Once we both graduated in May 2006 we started our business together with expanding the

Holstein bull calves, breaking ground on our hog barn in October 2006 and finishing construction in January 2007."

Tell me a little about what you grow/raise/produce/or service provided.

"I contract my time and experience to a hog integrator to provide high quality pork for human consumption. All the livestock we raise/grow is for human consumption. The trucks haul goods all across the United States, 38 of the 50 states."

Where do you sell or provide services to? Who is your end consumer?

"All of the hogs are marketed by the integrator to Hormel or Tyson. The cattle and sheep are sold to local markets/private buyers for meat."

What makes your farm/business unique or special? What are you proud of?

"We are most proud of how we started our business. We started it all on our own from nothing. When we both graduated from college we didn't have family operations to go home to and start working at. We both had goals that we wanted to achieve and we knew that it was going to require hard work so we purchased a 5 acre homestead with a house and two sheds and another 5 acres to build a hog barn on. Over the years we have diversified our business so we don't have 'all our eggs in one basket' so to speak. It is our goal to have something for our children to come home to if they choose to."

Why do you grow/raise/produce? What went into your decision to do what you do?

"We both graduated with agricultural degrees and we wanted to start our own business. Our overall goal is to someday buy or rent land to be able to raise our own crops to feed our livestock. So to help us obtain that goal we have started Klinghagen Trucking and I contract my time and expertise out to a local hog integrator."

What is one interesting fact about your farm/crops/livestock/your business you would like to share.

"We buy all of our feed for the sheep and calves as we do not own/rent any land to produce our own feed."

What do you love most about farming/business?

"We love that we get to work side by side with our children. Even though they are very young they are so eager to know about what we do, why, and want to help. They understand that we raise livestock to feed ourselves and the people around the world. After all they are our future in agriculture and we enjoy teaching them the farm living values."

What is one thing you wish consumers knew about what you do or your farm/business?

We give our animals the best care/treatment we can provide. If that means penning up calves in the heated shop during a snow storm, bringing lambs into the house for a hot bath to prevent hypothermia, and getting up every two hours to check or feed then that is what we do. They are our responsibility and rely on us to take care of them. Next to our children these animals are our life.