

MN Agriculture: Derrick and Amanda Sommers, Sheep, Dairy and 4-H

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Day 24 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Derrick and Amanda Sommers. The Sommers own and operate a dairy farm in Waseca county. They milk 400 cows and also raise sheep for show animals. Amanda is the 4-H coordinator for Blue Earth County. Both Derrick and Amanda have been involved in agriculture nearly their entire lives and they are bringing their two children into the same agriculture lifestyle they grew up in.

Social Media Sites:

Facebook: [Sommers' Show Lambs](#)

Website: [Sommers' Show Lambs](#)

Tell me a little about your farm and/or business?

"My husband and I own a 400 cow dairy farm in rural Waseca, MN. We also raise the heifer calves at our farm until 3-months old. At that time the heifer calves go to another farm until 12-13 months old when we get them back for breeding. We have 10 employees (full and part time) that are integral to our daily operations on the dairy. We milk our cows twice a day and use a double 10 parlor. Derrick and I also have a hobby flock of ewes in which we breed about 20 ewes and sell show lambs to 4-H exhibitors.

I work full time off the operation as the 4-H Program Coordinator for Blue Earth County, located in Mankato. I have worked with 4-H for almost 10 years as I started two weeks after college graduation. I grew up knowing I wanted to educate our young people and the general public about agriculture and the basics of where their *food* comes from. I currently do all of the bookwork for the dairy, as well as payroll. I help on the dairy as needed and the girls and I also help feed calves periodically."

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"We are third generation farmers of "Sommertime Dairy". It was originally started with Derrick's Grandparents, Allen and Janice Sommers, was then taken over by his parents, Rick and Bonita Sommers, and one year ago we transitioned into the owners of the dairy (November 7th!). Derrick grew up on the farm and helped with farm work as soon as he was able to walk, literally! Amanda grew up on a small hobby farm in Goodhue, MN near Red Wing. Amanda's family raised a flock of ewes, and also some cattle and hogs for 4-H projects growing up. Derrick and Amanda took over the care of these ewes back in 2007."

"Agriculture has always been in both of our blood, and we are both very passionate about the agricultural and livestock industries. We are firm believers that the life-skills and work ethic we gained being raised on the farm are skills you cannot learn elsewhere. We hope to instill these same values and beliefs into our children and feel the best way for them to gain these skills is to be exposed to them at a young age. We are hopeful to raise hard working, and respectful young children who value agriculture and livestock and realize how our *daily lives revolve* around agriculture."

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

"We currently milk 400 Holstein Dairy Cows. Our milk is sold to AMPI Creamery and goes to their Rochester plant to be made into cheese. Our lambs are sold to 4-H'ers who show them throughout the summer for 4-H and FFA Projects."

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

"Our milk is sold to AMPI Creamery and goes to their Rochester plant to be made into Cheese. Our end consumer is anyone who purchases dairy products from their local grocery store."

What do you love most about farming/business?

"I love the *life-lessons* that are learned on a farm. My 4-year-old daughter knows more about agriculture and livestock than a lot of people! She has been witness to the good times and the bad times that can happen on a farm! When animals are sick, we treat them. But not all animals always make it, even though we try our best to get them healthy again. That is part of raising livestock. However, we know our animals better than anyone else. You can tell a lot by just simply observing your animals on a daily basis – you can observe behavior changes that tell you if they aren't feeling the best.

I also love that farmers are passionate about what they do, as well as the connections we make with other farmers! We are located in the "livestock capital" of Waseca County as we are surrounded by farms. We are blessed to have a tremendous set of neighbors who are willing to help each other out at the drop of a hat! No farmer can do everything themselves, and my husband and I wouldn't be able to run our dairy farm without our employees and our tremendous set of farming neighbors who are willing to pitch in at any time of day or night! Even if it involves chasing cows!"

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

"One thing I'd like to share with consumers about dairy farming is how truly hard dairy farmers work to provide you with all of the dairy products that you know and love: milk, cheese, butter, yogurt and more! Dairy farming is a type of farming that most do not understand. Dairy farming is different than any other type of farm: crops or even other livestock operations. Dairy Farmers work very long-hour days to ensure you are given the best quality dairy product on your table. We care for our dairy cows, heifers and calves to the best of our ability. We keep a close eye on them to ensure they are healthy and comfortable on a daily basis. I like to think that our *cows are better taken care* of than many other animals! Dairy farming is truly for those who have a passion to be a dairy farmer – it's not for everyone! When it is the coldest week of the year, and its -10 degrees outside, or when it's the hottest day of the year and it is 100 degrees outside, think of your local dairy farmer. They don't have the option to take those days off – as the cows always need to be milked! There are good days on a dairy farm, and bad days, just like any livestock farm, but we farm because we are *passionate* about dairy farming and care for our animals. My husband spends each and every day at the farm, weekends, and holidays included! Cows don't give their bosses holidays off!"

What is one thing about Minnesota that people from other areas do not know about or are missing because they don't live here?

"Southern Minnesota is a beautiful place to be! I love the beauty of southern Minnesota. I also love the amount of livestock being raised "down here." Minnesota is truly a special place to be! I could

live without the harshness of Minnesota winter's sometime (especially when starting to lamb our ewes in January, or the brutal reality of operating a dairy farm where everything freezes when it's so nasty cold!), but that is just the fact of life!"

What is your favorite Minnesota location?

"One of Derrick and my favorite places to be is any County Fair, State Fair or livestock show. We were both raised in 4-H, and have seen the value and life-skills that it teaches young people. We both showed animals growing up, and are firm believers in the work-ethic, and the life-long leadership and communication skills that it provided to us. We sell show lambs to 4-H'ers in the spring, and try to get to as many fairs and shows to watch those 4-H'ers compete throughout the summer. This is our hobby and our connection to the show ring. We also lease out a few dairy heifers for 4-H'ers to show. We have enjoyed serving as mentors to these young 4-H'ers, and to see their excitement, passion and hard-work grow as they work with their animals is second to none."

Is there anything else you would like to add?

"My husband, Derrick and I met at college at the University of Minnesota in St Paul. Derrick majored in Animal Science, and Amanda in Agricultural Education. We got married in 2009 and have lived on our 5 acre hobby farm in Rural Waseca ever since. We have a 4-year old daughter, Hannah, and a 1-year old daughter, Abby."

Read the other people featured in my "[30 Days of MN Ag.](#)"

There are others that are also participating in the 30 Days of Blogging Challenge. Feel free to check these out:

- [Janice Person aka JP Loves Cotton: A Month of Memories](#)
- [Rural Route 2 – 30 Days of Farm Girl Faith](#)
- [Prairie Californian – 30 Days of Food](#)
- [Mackinson Dairy – Women in Dairy](#)