

MN Agriculture: Megan Thorson, 4-H, Kids, Cows and Chickens

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Day 5 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Megan Thorson. Megan is from Glenville, MN and is a 4-H program coordinator along with farming with her husband and children. Glenville is located in Freeborn in the southeast corner of Minnesota. After reading Megan's story, it just has reconfirmed to me just how valuable it is to raise a family on the farm. Kids are happy and have a strong work ethic. I just love reading her story!

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

"My husband and I own around 100 cow calf pairs and he also farms row crops (corn/beans) and produce hay for the cattle. My kids and I also raise around 25 laying hens and feed out about 150-200 broilers every year for local families. I also work for the University of MN Extension as a 4-H Program Coordinator so the other part of my time is spent there."

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"My husband is a 3rd generation farmer. He actually grew up milking dairy cows but changed it up to beef cows when graduating high school. Both of my grandparents farmed but my parents did not. I started farming with my husband 11 years ago when we got married."

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

"WE grow most of our own feed for the cows/calves with exceptions for protein additives and mineral supplements. They are pasture raised with some grain all summer. The calves are then weaned in the fall and are given full grain and hay until we sell them. The cows go on corn stalks and are given a mixture of corn silage/hay during the fall and winter months during calving. WE raise the calves until approximately 800-900 lbs and they we sell around 50-60 steers and some heifers to other people to feed out to market weight. The remaining heifers are used as replacement heifers to see which ones will be kept in the herd.

WE raise chickens and eggs mostly so people can purchase home-grown chickens and can know where their meat comes from. Customers are always invited down to come and see the housing and feed we give them."

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

"WE sell our chickens and eggs to local families and friends in the area. Our calves are sold locally to cattle finishing units who will feed them out until finished weight. WE raise corn and soybeans not only for our own feed, but to sell to the grain market which helps feed the world. Not sure where all of our soybeans and corn ends up!

Some calves are also sold to 4-H'ers to use as 4-H projects."

If there is one thing you could change about farming it would be ...

"the stress of the unknowns. The price changes, the weather changes, animals dying or getting sick for no reason. It is stressful trying to decide when to buy, when to sell and what to do in certain situations. Weather can make or break a crop for just about any ag product in MN. It is very unpredictable.

The other part is scheduling vacations around the seasons. For us, we have a small window to vacation since our season starts in January with calving, spring planting, summer breeding and haying, spraying crops and then it goes into cutting silage, weaning calves, more haying, harvesting crops. I sometimes wish we could just leave for a week, but that doesn't ever happen!"

What is a most embarrassing moment you have had on the farm?

"When I first married my husband he was moving cattle from our pasture to the home lot. He needed the livestock trailer over at the pasture so he was going to have me bring it over. I didn't swing over far enough and wasn't paying attention so I ran the trailer into the side of our shop building. Wrecked the whole axle on the trailer and broke a bunch of siding off the corner of the building. He doesn't have me move a lot of things for him anymore unless there is ample room."

What do you love most about farming/business?

"The thing I love most about farming is that it is a *family* business. My husband is a 3rd generation farmer. My kids have helped me and been outside with the animals since they were born (my oldest is 8). They have ridden in the combine since birth and could probably drive a bobcat better than most people by the age of 5. They learn a lot of life lessons (maybe some not so good) and have learned a lot about how food is grown and where it comes from. My children have responsibilities at a young age to care for animals and help on the farm. They feed animals, pick eggs, love scooping manure, help haul cattle & help load chickens to the butcherer. As they get older they will learn more responsibilities and help with more on the farm. A lot of days are stressful and long and I feel guilty that we don't have as much down time like some families, but WE are building a strong work ethic in our kids."

What is your favorite Minnesota location?

"Although there are MANY favorite locations-I really love the lake country up north-near Brainerd MN or near Walker MN."

Is there anything else you would like to add?

"There are SO many ag related businesses in MN and the best part is so many different types. WE have different crops in the southern part of the state that we have in the northern part. We have an abundance of apple orchards and wineries. More and more grocery stores are trying to sell local produce or meats and don't forget about the local farmers markets popping up every where. We grow so many different types of crops produce and meat here in the great state of MN!"

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](#)