

MN Agriculture: Reuben and Judy Bode - Pigs, A Family Affair

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Day 28 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Reuben and Judy Bode. Reuben and Judy live in Courtland, MN, which is near Mankato, MN. The Bode family raise pigs and Reuben is also on the Minnesota Pork Board. One particular item of interest to me about Reuben and Judy is the tours they give on their farm. They have given tours to Senator Al Franken, Senator Kathy Sharon and Representative Terry Morrow. It's so important that our legislature understand agriculture and what a better way than a farm tour. Thanks Reuben and Judy for doing this!

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

"We have a farrow to finish pig operation. We manage 2400 sows. Piglets are weaned at 21 days old and moved to one of our finishing barns. The growers then raise the pigs to 270-290 lbs, at that time they are ready for market. All our finishing sites are within 25 miles of our sow unit."

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"We started farming with my parents (Ervel and Lorna Bode) in 1971 with a small dairy herd and small feeder pig operations. That same year we purchased our first 80 acres of land."

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

"We mainly grow a rotation of corn and soybeans on 1100 acres. All corn grown is used for feed in our operation in addition to partnering with two local elevators to purchase additional feed as needed."

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

"All the pork raised goes to two processing plants. From there, the product is distributed to the meat counters in grocery stores for the consumers to purchase."

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

"The Bode farm was purchased in 1882 at \$28/acre. We have the third (Reuben), fourth (Ryan) & fifth (Dustin) generation all working on our farm; it's been in the Bode name for *133 years!*"

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

"When we began farming we had a small dairy herd as well as some pigs. Our interest was more in the pigs so in 1985 the government had a dairy buyout program of which we submitted a bid and were accepted. That was the end of the dairy and the beginning of our hog operation. Our first expansion grew our herd to 200 sows; then in 1994, our son Ryan decided to farm with us, we then grew to 600 sows. At this time we were a farrow-to-finish operation all on one site, however a short time later we decided for disease control purposes, to move the finishing part of the operation offsite. As we did this, we could expand the sow herd to 1200 head using the existing finishing barns for gestation. In 2003, it was our goal to fill the finishing barns with all the same age pigs and be more efficient so we increased to our current 2400 sow unit."

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

"the misconception that people have about the way we raise our pigs; we want *everyone to know about the care and treatment we give to them.*"

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

"Most of our finishing units are farmers with other family members who are able to stay on the farm and work because they now have a pig operation besides just farmland. Almost all of our employees at the sow unit site are local people who live in the area and like being on the farm."

What do you love most about farming/business?

"The freedom and challenges of running your own business, working with family and knowing that you must do the best you can everyday to succeed and that you help feed a hungry world with a good product."

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

"Consumers need to know that the food we feed our family and yours is the best and safest in the world. We have strict standards and guidelines we must abide by when we sell our pigs."

What is one thing no one knows about your farm/business/product that you would like to share?

"We have given educational tours to children and adults for years. Among those tours, we've hosted a tour for Senator Al Franken, Senator Kathy Sharon and Representative Terry Morrow and their staff to broaden their knowledge of animal agriculture and strengthen the education which has helped the hog industry."

Everyday we strive to keep our operation a place where our employees are able to take time off for family reasons, whether it's for sports, school functions, doctors appointments, etc. We are able to serve our employees with two meals a day, keeping it a family type atmosphere."

Who are your customers? Or what would you like to tell your customers?

"Our customers are anyone who enjoys a good pork meal!"

What makes Minnesota the place to farm/grow/raise/produce/service?

"The four seasons and the good rich soil make it a great place to live."

What is your favorite Minnesota location?

"We enjoy the Stillwater area, the scenery is different from ours."

What is one ag-related place in Minnesota that others need to know about. What is one non-ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about and why?

"Ag: Southern Minnesota has some of the richest, most productive land in the world."

Non-Ag: The many new wineries; a new industry in Minnesota."

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](#)