

Meet A Cattle Farmer!



Photos by Joseph L. Murphy/IFBF

Steve Swenka

◇ Tiffin, IA ◇

Steve and his family of three grow corn, beans, oats and hay, but their main emphasis is on purebred Angus seedstock bulls and breeding heifers. The Swenka Family operation in Johnson County takes pride in their beef industry heritage.

Does your family have any history with the cattle industry?

I am the 4th generation here on this family farm. My Great-Grandfather had a small herd of Hereford cows. He started out feeding cattle and then started an Angus cow herd with my father when my father graduated from high school. I became involved after I graduated from College in 1990, when we expanded our cow herd and also our seedstock offering.

Why do you think the beef industry is important for Iowa? For the nation? For the world?

The beef industry's fundamental responsibility is to provide a wholesome protein source for citizens of our state, country and our world. In Iowa alone, nearly 30,000 family farms are involved in the beef industry. 40,000 jobs across Iowa are either directly or indirectly related to the cattle industry. And certainly not least, \$5.1 Billion comes from the Iowa Cattle industry.

Why is the Beef Industry important? Because the West wasn't won on salad!

Why should farmers and ranchers be stewards of the land?

The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about why farmers & ranchers should be good stewards of the land is, "Why shouldn't they? Why shouldn't all Americans be good stewards of the land?" Many of our farms & ranches have been in the family for generations and some have achieved or are approaching Century/Heritage Farm status. We feel a moral obligation to care for the land and pass it down to the next generation. My Grandfather, who is now 94, stated numerous times throughout his life that his main ambition was to leave the land in better condition than when he got it. As a young boy I remember my Grandfather telling me "take care of the land and it will take care of you." This fundamental belief in land stewardship is deeply ingrained in my family and I hope & plan to pass it down to my sons one day. It's no secret that good conservation practices and land stewardship go hand in hand with better crops and better yields, but a healthy bottom line is **not** the main reason that farmers & ranchers are good stewards of the land.



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