

Nebraska Beef Council

...strengthening demand for beef

www.nebeef.org

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A 100-YEAR-OLD FARM AND FEEDYARD FAMILY LOOKS BACK, WHILE MOVING FORWARD

Joan Ruskamp and her husband, Steve, own and operate J & S Feedlot and Farm, which has been in the Ruskamp family for more than 100 years. Joan and Steve place a great deal of value on respecting the generations that came before them, while at the same time, finding innovative ways to improve the farm and strengthen the path for future stewards of the land.

As an advocate for the beef community, Joan is often asked questions about modern day production practices and the daily tasks of life on the farm.

How are you working to carry on your farm's legacy?

Joan Ruskamp (JR): We are constantly looking back with respect and looking forward with responsibility. On our farm, we are utilizing the best resources and research that we have available. Even though none of our children are planning to return to the farm, we do have grandchildren, so we are looking down the road to keep the farm sustainable for them. We also want to continue to build an environment where cattle can thrive for the next generation. We always want our farm to be better the next year than it was the year before, so we reinvest in the land to improve where we can.

What does sustainability mean to you?

JR: The land on this farm has provided for many families in its 100+ years with Ruskamp caretakers. It has allowed us to thrive! Walking in the shoes, or boots, of a farmer has opened my eyes and understanding of how we work with nature to grow food year after year. Marrying a farmer gave me hands-on learning to understand the day-to-day routine of caring for the land and animals. When it comes to sustainability, I view that as part of my responsibility as the current caretaker. We must treat the land with respect and feed cattle in a way that allows them to thrive while having the best impact possible on the environment around us.

How important is animal welfare at your feedyard?

JR: We are always trying to make our cattle as comfortable as possible. We collaborate with experts to provide the best possible care, whether it be through sprinklers, shades, sloping pens (so the cattle aren't standing in mud) or other methods that we haven't yet explored. We provide nutritionally balanced feed rations to meet the specific needs of each group of cattle. We also place high importance on low-stress cattle handling to keep the cattle calm when we are administering vaccinations or moving them from pen to pen.

How do you use antibiotics at your feedyard?

JR: It is our duty to protect the welfare of the cattle under our watch. We use antibiotics as one tool in our entire toolkit to care for our cattle. Our animals are evaluated to determine the best course of action for

combating an illness, which may or may not be antibiotics. If necessary, an animal is provided a veterinarian-prescribed treatment, which allows us to assist them in fighting off harmful bacteria. That animal is kept in a hospital pen for recovery and then returned back to its home pen.

What is your favorite beef meal?

JR: My favorite beef recipe is thinly sliced Eye of Round Roast sandwiches. My husband is the grilling expert in our family and he has perfected a technique of grilling Eye of Round Roasts. The meat is grilled at a low temp for several hours until it reaches 140 degrees Fahrenheit. We served this to some five-star chefs from a neighboring town while they were here on a tour. They loved it and wanted the recipe!

Readers can follow Joan's farm and ranch activities on social media via Instagram and Twitter: [@joanruskamp](https://twitter.com/joanruskamp) or through her blog: www.DustInMyCoffee.blogspot.com

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The Nebraska Beef Council is a non-profit organization served by a nine-member board of directors. The volunteers oversee Nebraska's beef checkoff and checkoff-funded programs. Programs for marketing and promotion are funded by the \$1 beef checkoff.