

# THE NORTON FAMILY



**2020**

**BOONE COUNTY  
FARM FAMILY  
OF THE YEAR**



# Recognizing outstanding farm families since 1947



*The Harrison Daily Times would like to congratulate the Norton family on being announced as the 2020 Boone County Farm Family of the Year*

Since 1947, the Arkansas Farm Family of the Year program has served as a vehicle to recognize outstanding farm families throughout the state.

The objectives of the Farm Family of the Year program are:

- To give recognition and encouragement to farm families who are doing an outstanding job on their farms and in their communities;
- To gain recognition of the importance of agriculture in the community and state;
- To disseminate information on improved farm practices and management.

The Farm Family of the Year program is the longest running effort of its kind in the nation.

The program sponsors are Arkansas Farm Bureau, Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, Farm Credit Services of Western Arkansas, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services and Farm Credit Midsouth.

Program partners are Arkansas Agriculture Department, Arkansas FFA Association, Arkansas Press Association, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and USDA Rural Development.



Lee H. Dunlap/staff

The Will and Rachel Norton family is the 2020 Boone County Farm Family of the Year. Will and Rachel are parents to future farmers, daughter Whitley, 6, and son Kal, 3.

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# Nortons Named

Staff Report  
news@harrisondaily.com

Will and Rachel Norton have been announced as the 2020 Boone County Farm Family of the Year.

Farming is a family tradition for Will Norton, and his love of agriculture goes way back to when he was growing up on the same farm he now manages. His parents, Dennis and Judy Norton, raised cattle and Will says he has relatives who were born in the house on the farm.

At 13, Will purchased 9.45 acres up the road and also bought a few calves and a career was launched. After growing up on the fender of a tractor, standing on the seat of a truck and riding on the back of a horse, he graduated to spending summers driving a combine for his uncle, and cutting wood and cedar mini logs in the winter. After spending years hauling cattle and working at the sale barn, Will moved from one calf to two and the rest is history.

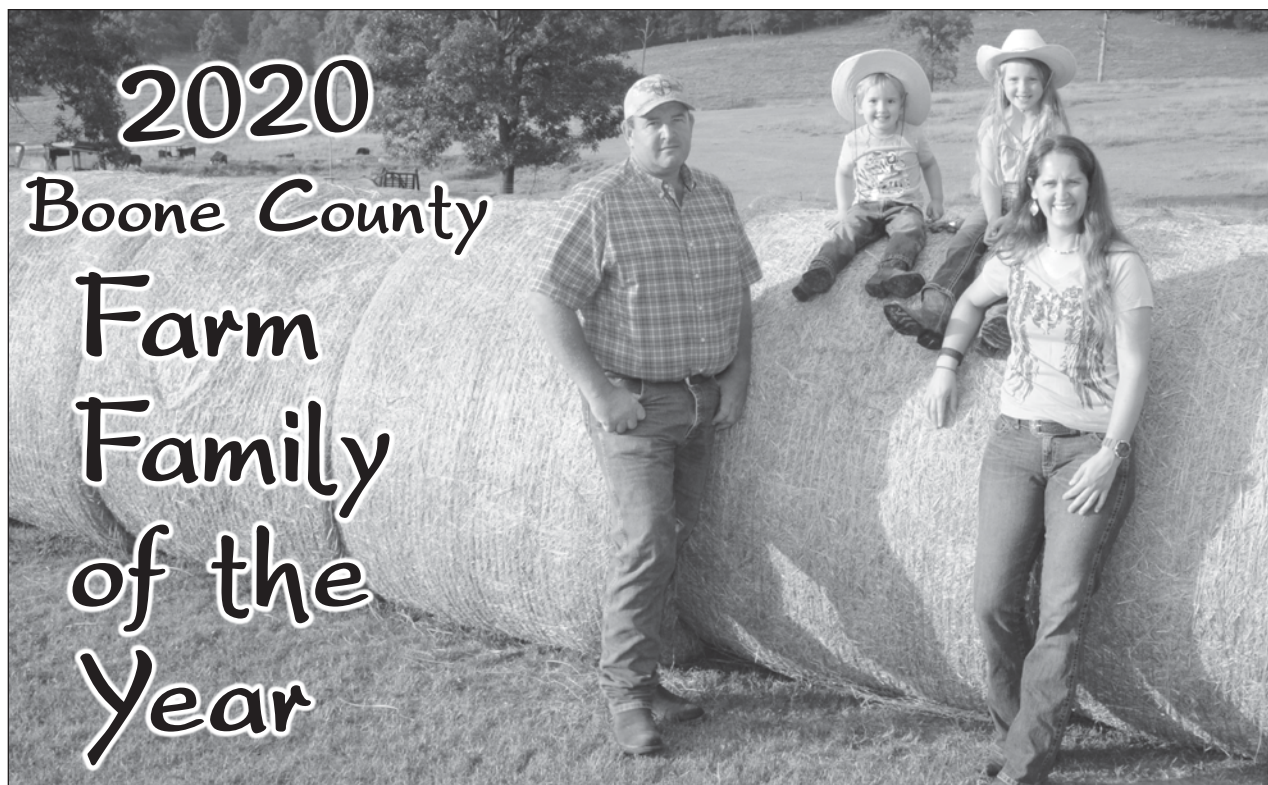
Rachel also has farming in her background. She grew up on a farm near Everton, with parents Bill and Judy Green. She learned to drive a tractor, helped with hay and cattle, and rode horses.

Will and Rachel have been married 10 years and while Will keeps the home front running smoothly, Rachel is a biologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. She helps out on the farm by doing a majority of the computer work, helping work cattle and riding horses.

The couple's two children, Whitley, 6, and Kal, 3, help mom and dad with farm chores, while they're not busy with schoolwork and practicing "working cows" with their kid-size working toys.

Both Whitley and Kal help out by feeding and showing bottle calves at the county fair. Whitley and Kal play an important role on the farm as the "Shoo Crew" when they make sure the cattle are pushed up the chute.

The Nortons currently operate about 1,300 acres



Lee H. Dunlap/staff

and own 243 acres, including 100 acres of hay. They have a 75 cow/calf operation with a partnership on their feeder and feedlot calves. They partner with families with land near theirs who are retired or busy with other ventures and work with them to care for the cattle using their land. This partnership allows the family to run more cattle without purchasing additional acreage.

It's important to the Norton family to be good stewards of their land. They focus on improving soil health, working to make it the best by using fertilizer, herbicides and grazing techniques to grow more grass.

They have added 2 catch pens to doctor the cattle without having to drive them into a designated corral. Each catch pen has feed troughs and a gate which can be shut if there is an issue. They emphasize maximum cattle health with vaccination and worming programs which allow the cattle to be turned out to graze without being brought in for routine worming and implants.

They also work toward attaining a uniform cow herd, keeping them closer in calving time range, and working at growing better grass to eliminate hay use in winter.

Goals for the future include more cattle working facilities, improving soil health and acquiring more land.

Conservation is an important part of being a good steward of the farm for the Nortons.

"Farming on Crooked Creek means we are the caretakers for our stretch of the creek," they said. "Good grass and healthy soil helps eliminate erosion and runoff. It also helps lock in naturally occurring nutrients and those found in fertilizer. We also maintain electric fences along the creek to prevent cattle from accessing water in multiple locations to prevent erosion. We also support wildlife in the area by conducting field burns and allowing some brushy cover."

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Lee H. Dunlap/staff

Will and Rachel Norton and their children, Whitley and Kal stand in front of their homestead.



Lee H. Dunlap/staff

The Norton family stands in front of their tractor they use on their farm.



Lee H. Dunlap/staff

It's feeding time for the cattle at the Norton farm.



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Lee H. Dunlap/staff

The Norton family has a 75-head cow/calf operation with a partnership in feeder and feedlot calves.

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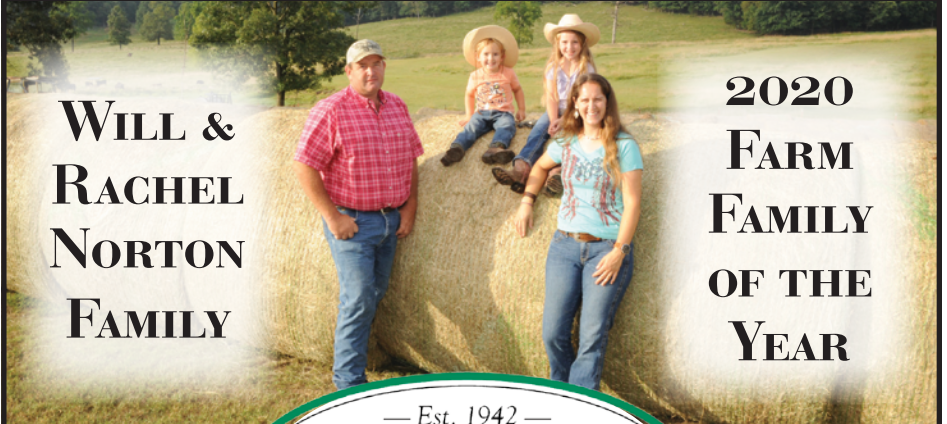
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# How farmers are using drones

The farmers of yesteryear might not be too familiar with their surroundings if they were to visit a modern farm. While the men and women who made their livings as farmers decades ago would no doubt still recognize certain farm features that have withstood the test of time, they might not understand the inner workings of the modern farm, particularly in regard to the role technology now plays within the agricultural sector.

Technology has changed agriculture in myriad ways. The methods farmers employ to produce food and improve the efficiency of their operations has changed as technology has evolved. One of the more noticeable changes that's hard to miss on modern farms is the use of agricultural drones.

Drones have been around for decades. Sometimes referred to as "unmanned aerial vehicles," or "UAVs," drones can be utilized in ways that can save farmers money and protect the planet.

- **Monitor crops:** According to senseFly, the commercial drone subsidiary of Parrot Group, drones can help farmers effectively monitor their crops. With a drone flying overhead, farmers can spot and quickly identify issues affecting their crops before those issues escalate into something larger.
- **Soil analysis:** Another potential benefit of agricultural drones highlights their role in analyzing soil. Agricultural drones utilize complex mapping functions to gather data about the soil, including areas where it might be stressed. That enables farmers to develop accurate soil samples that can be used to guide decisions in regard to irrigation and fertilization.
- **Reduce waste:** SenseFly notes that data gathered by drones can help farmers determine the vigor of their crops at various stages of growth. Such information



can prevent overfertilization and overwatering, thereby reducing waste and runoff, benefitting the planet as a result.

- **Planning:** Drones can be used to collect data on crop growth and health at various times throughout the growing season. That can help farmers develop accurate predictions regarding harvest quality and crop yield, making it easier for them to plan ahead.

Agricultural drones are one of the many examples that illustrate how technology has changed and will continue to change the ways modern farmers conduct business.

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# Solutions for meat and poultry shortages

COVID-19 continues to disrupt businesses all over the world. Supply chain interruptions and a generalized slow down of transport and shipping have become the norm since COVID has wreaked havoc on the globe.

The meat and poultry industry continues to be adversely affected by COVID-related interruptions. COVID has complicated the path from the farm to the grocery stores. Various reports indicate that more than 30 plants that produce beef, pork and chicken shut down between late April and early May as a result of virus outbreaks among workers. Plant operators say it's difficult to curtail coronavirus when it spreads so easily among plant workers in the cold, damp temperatures.

In turn, shoppers are not only finding severe shortages on these products, they're also seeing beef, chicken and pork prices rising. Kroger, Costco, ShopRite, and many other grocery store chains have restricted how much meat customers can buy at a time. Nearly one-fifth of Wendy's restaurants in the United States removed hamburgers and other beef products from their online menus, according to Stephens Inc., due to shortages. Other restaurants have had to increase prices. Many consumers are seeking alternatives to meat in response to shortages and rising prices.

This may be a time when some turn more readily to vegetarianism, or at the very least, incorporate more meat alternatives into their diets until the wave of shortages has subsided. Here are some plant-based foods that can bridge the gap until meat and poultry supplies are back to pre-coronavirus levels.

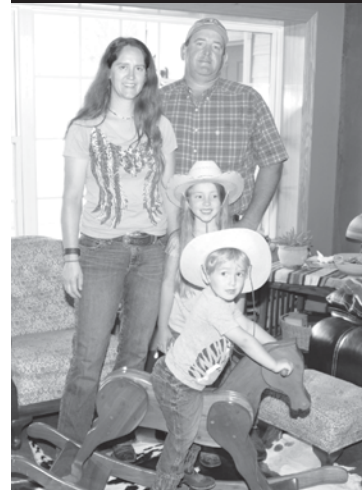
- **Eggplant:** This vegetable has a meaty, earthy texture and can be prepared in many ways. From dips to stews to ground veggie patties, eggplant holds up in many recipes.
  - **Mushrooms:** Large portobello mushrooms have long served as burger substitutes. Chopped or sliced mushrooms also provide meaty texture and bite.
  - **Jackfruit:** The texture of jackfruit is quite similar to shredded chicken and it can be a replacement for pulled pork.
  - **Soy products:** From tofu to seitan to tempeh, soy often can replace other proteins in many different dishes and long has been a staple of plant-based diets.
  - **Cauliflower:** This mild vegetable has been replacing many different foods for years. Cauliflower has been used in lieu of potatoes, eggs and even flour in pizza crusts. It can serve as a healthy, non-meat alternative to meatballs.
  - **Lentils:** Lentils have a very high level of protein by weight and they're only 1 percent fat. They're an excellent ingredient to add bulk to stews and soups.
- In the face of meat and poultry shortages, consumers can turn to plant-based alternatives to keep meals satisfying and flavorful.



Lee H. Dunlap/staff

Will Norton has been working in agriculture since he was 13, when he purchased 9.45 acres and bought some calves.

## CONGRATULATIONS!



## WILL & RACHEL NORTON

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