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The Business Farmer

FARM & RANCH SUPPLY



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The future of agriculture – in the children's hands

BY JESS OAKS

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TORRINTON –E. M. Tiffany said it best, “I believe in the future of agriculture...,” as written in The National FFA Creed.

The future of agriculture is going places. With technology advancements, equipment upgrading and the ability to watch the calving barn from the comfort of your own house in the wintertime, agriculture is moving at the speed of light.

The future of agriculture has been placed in the smallest of hands to continue the legacy throughout the tri-state area.

Megan Salzer, her husband Tate and their two children, Cooper, age

four and Reata, age two, manage a small bunch of cattle near Angora, Nebraska.

“I grew up on a cow/calf operation south of Alliance in the Angora area. My husband grew up on a cow/calf operation in north central South Dakota. We are thrilled to be able to share our passion for the agriculture industry with our kiddos,” Salzer explained.

The Salzer children, like their parents, clearly have a passion for agriculture. They hold a variety of responsibilities on the family ranch operation and are often seen following their parent’s footsteps.

“Our children are responsible for feeding our cow dogs, feeding their horses, checking waterers, help-

ing with gates, and assisting us with whatever other tasks we are working on. That’s not to say they are forced to work with us – they absolutely love doing so,” Salzer explained.

Raising children in agriculture settings can be dangerous and Salzer is hypervigilant with her active young children.

“I always watch them very closely, so they do not get themselves hurt. I think one of my biggest fears is having one of them get caught up on a PTO,” Salzer explained.

But sometimes the dangers of farm and ranch life aren’t always as expected.

“My daughter is fearless and would spend every waking minute

around the horses and cows if I’d let her. I am always watching to make sure she doesn’t go into the corral alone,” Salzer said.

Salzer is proud to show her children work ethic, horsemanship and stockmanship.

“We have a passion for training horses and are thrilled that our kids are showing the same desire to work with horses,” Salzer said.

Salzer continues to teach her children the values she learned as a child.

“I believe that the cowboy way will disappear if we don’t work to preserve it. My Grandpa is a cowboy and an excellent horseman. My Dad

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is the same. I'd like to think I am, as well. I hope that advocating for agriculture is as important to the next generation as it is for my husband and myself," Salzer explained.

Elizabeth Stricker, her husband Ryan along with his brother and sister-in-law own a farming operation

consisting of about 3,000 acres in the Gering Valley just south of Gering, Nebraska. They raise corn, dry edible beans, alfalfa and wheat.

"We are the third generation to own and operate the original farm that was homesteaded by Ryan's Grandparents over 80 years ago," Stricker explained.

Both of Sticker's sons, age Dalton, 11 and Dawson, 15, assist on their farm operation.

"Both children operate farm equipment and assist with tasks, such as irrigating and digging ditches. Our oldest son works full time during the growing season, when not in school. He has plans to join

the operation and pursue a career in production agriculture. Like his parents, he is very passionate about the industry," Stricker said.

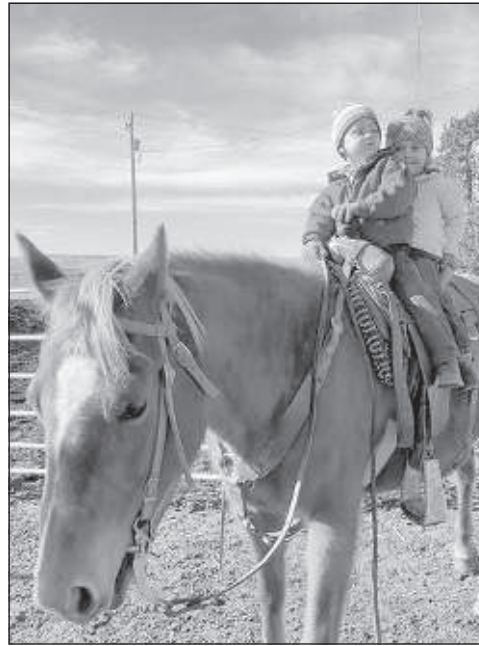
By teaching their children, the Stricker's introduced their children the dangers of in the agriculture in-

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COURTESY AMY WALDRON

Nubian twins, Arthur and Mabel, are pictured with their mother, Midge right after they were born. This set of twins marks the fifth and sixth kid born to 4-H participant, Amy Waldron in Casper. Amy and her mother Amanda have been in the agriculture industry since 2018 with their small mom/daughter operation. Amy enjoys the hard work and dedication that her animals take.



COURTESY MEGAN SALZER

Cooper Salzer, age four, and his sister, Reata, age 2, take pride in their families small operations in Nebraska where they run cattle and train horses.



COURTESY MEGAN SALZER

Cooper Salzer, age four, helps his grandpa feed hay on his small family-run cattle operation near Angora, Nebraska. Salzer, like many other area children, has grown up in the agriculture industry.



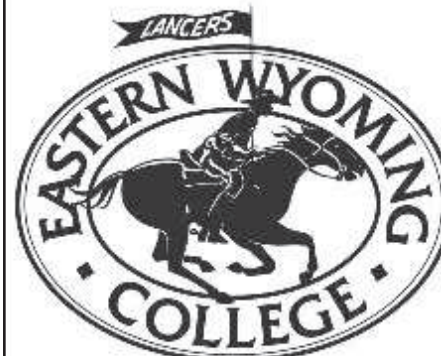
COURTESY AMANDA WALDRON

Amy Waldron, 14, began her agriculture career with the help of 4-H where she convinced her mom, Amanda, to purchase market swine, dairy goats and market sheep. Amy also enjoys riding her horse.

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dustry as well as the dangers of the machinery on their farm.

“From a very young age, we have taught our children to be respectful of agriculture equipment and have educated them about the dangers. Both of our sons are cautious when operating equipment,” Stricker explained.

Both Elizabeth and her husband, Ryan, grew up in the agriculture industry with a mixture of cattle and crops.

“That rural way of life and work ethic was engrained in both of us. We continue to share those values and traditions with our children. We respect the work it takes to be successful in our industry, the strategic planning necessary to be financially stable, and the pride of reflecting on a rewarding growing season. We truly believe that family farms are the lifeblood of our rural communities and the backbone of our nation.

We are proud to continue to contribute to building our legacy,” Stricker said.

Amy Waldron, age 14, drug her mom, Amanda into agriculture. Amy shows both market swine and dairy goats in 4-H, with the hopes of adding market sheep.

The daughter-mother duo has a small operation in Casper, Wyoming, where Amy is responsible for the care her 4-H animals receive.

“Amy is responsible for caring for animals including feeding, cleaning pens, bathing animals and getting them ready for show, hoof care, deworming and vaccinating animals,” Amanda said.

Amanda, who began her small operation in 2018, didn't grow up with livestock so the experience has been a change. She looks forward to teaching Amy about self-sufficiency, ethical treatment and care of animals and livestock as well as their

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COURTESY LARAE DAY

The Day girls, ages 8 and 10 are often seen around the farm pitching in wherever necessary and which includes feeding the bottle calves on the family ranch in Southwestern Nebraska.

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basic needs.

Amy explained there is another element to the dangers of agriculture life.

“Sometimes the sadness that comes with losing an animal from death, sick animals, or predators getting them,” Amy said.

Over her short 4-H career, Amy has developed skills that will continue to make her successful in the agriculture community. Currently, she is the Windy City Wrangler's 4-H Club President.

“Being compassionate and giving them the best lives possible,” is something that Amy takes seriously.

LaRae Day of Southeastern Perkins County, in Southwestern Nebraska, runs about 700 head of cattle with her husband and their two daughters, ages 8 and 10.

“Our youngest [daughter] has a rabbit and our oldest [daughter] will be showing sheep for the first time this year in 4-H. They have always been helpful with bottle feeding calves when we have some,” Day said.

From an early age, the Day children were taught the “dos and don'ts” of their agriculture lifestyle.

“I would love for our kids and others, who live this life, to understand that we are a very small percentage with a huge responsibility, we GET to help feed the world,” Day explained.

Jeremy Row and his wife have a diversified ag operation located in central Nebraska where they manage about 1,200 acers and three young children. Row produces custom feedlot cattle, beef cattle and

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COURTESY ELIZABETH STRICKER

One of the advantages to agriculture life is the breathtaking sunsets. Dawson Stricker and his uncle Preston are ditching corn rows on their family farm near Gering.

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row crops.

“The kids (ages one year to 6 years) mostly help with the animals at our home, horses, chickens, dogs, cats, and the garden. They do occasionally go with us to the farm and enjoy opening gates, working cattle, moving cattle, and helping feed. The 6-year-old now helps move the cattle horseback,” Row explained. The Rows, like most families, hopes that the presence of agriculture in the lives of their children will help them establish a strong work ethic.

Just outside of Akron, Colorado sits a small sheep ranch operated by the Marini Family. Tamera and her husband Bo have been raising sheep for about five years. Although Bo was raising sheep as a child, this task came as a new way of life for Tamera, who was raised in the city. The Marini's have three children Grant (7), Erin (four) and Witney (one) who

enjoy helping with the daily chores.

“They help as much as they can being as young as they are. They are responsible for feeding bottle lambs, pushing up hay and watering,” Marini explained. “Some values and ethics that we hope to instill in the next generation is that nothing in life comes free and if you want it you have to put in the work. We had to work very hard for the life we live and will continue to do so as long as we are able,” Marini added.

Cassandra Ridgway, her husband, and children raise Suffolk and Columbia/Rambouillet sheep near Loma, Colorado. Ridgway, a fourth-generation sheep rancher, attributes her knowledge of the sheep industry to her parents and grandparent.

“Right now, my girls are 4 and almost 2. Although they can't help in big ways just yet- they most definitely help in little ways. They help us water, grain the sheep and horses,

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COURTESY CASSANDRA RIDGWAY

Not even an active toddler can slow down this fourth-generation Colorado sheep rancher, Cassandra Ridgway, and her husband. The couple and their two children ranch near Loma. Even shearing sheep is a family occasion.



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COURTESY JEREMY ROW

Jeremy Row and his three young children set out for a hard days work on their agriculture operation in central Nebraska.



COURTESY TAMERA MARINI

One of the young supervisors at the Marini Ranch outside of Akron keeps a watchful eye on her pen of sheep.

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bottle feed bums, and feed the pigs,” Ridgway explained.

“I am a firm believer in teaching children the value of hard-work, sacrifice, and responsibility. I love

teaching my kids how to be stewards of the land, and when we have a responsibility like that, we must have faith in the bad times and hold on to the good times. We also must be dedicated, and not lazy. I believe that not

all classrooms have four walls, and there are many lessons that farm, and ranch kids are taught that help them in the real world. I think kids should truly understand the circle of life, and the role they play in it,”

Ridgway added.

Tiffany said it best, “I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds,” especially when the deeds come from the tinniest of hands.



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