

Advocate

Dana Pieper neatly juggles volunteering, ranching and raising a family.

by *Sara Gugelmeyer*



Dana Pieper is more than a fifth generation Hereford breeder, hard-working mother and wife; she is also an advocate for the beef industry.

Dana — the daughter of Charlie and Darla Moore, granddaughter of Darrell Sutor — came by her Hereford interest naturally. She

and her brother, Kevin, and sister, Shellie, grew up showing polled Herefords and helping out on the family farm and ranch. That's the lifestyle Dana and her husband, David, have chosen for their children, Cody, who is 12 and Cady, 5.

"That is one of the great things about being a farm wife

and having your family be such an integral part because your family is able to be part of the farming operation right along with you," Dana says. "My kids are able to go out with us every day. When I go tag calves, my daughter goes in the pickup with me, and they learn something every day, and sometimes we learn together about certain things. It's nice for them to be a part of how we make our living so they can grow up understanding what we do."

There is plenty to learn. Dana and David live on her grandparents' ranch near Palco, Kan. "The ranch has been in the family for over 100 years," Dana says. "And we have actually raised Herefords for over 100 years."

Dana and David's own herd consists of about 100 cows, mainly Herefords, but also a few Angus to cross on Hereford bulls. The Piepers also look after about 30 Hereford cows that belong to Dana's grandfather, Darrell. Plus, they care for about 300 commercial cows for a corporation.

"That is how my husband and I are able to make ends meet," Dana says. "[For caring for the cows], we get a monthly check which helps us maintain our own cow herd and allows me to stay home and help with the cattle."

Also, Dana and her mother, Darla, have a farming enterprise of about 1,000 acres of milo and wheat. Although Dana and David have one employee to help them, Dana is very involved in the cattle business.

This spring, most of Dana's mornings were spent with Cady before she went to preschool for the afternoon. But this fall, Cady



Dana Pieper is a fifth generation Hereford breeder and is thankful that she can raise her children in the industry.

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will be in school all day. This change will allow Dana more time with the cows. “I will spend all day outside working with the cattle,” she says. “I tag all our cows’ calves. I gather all their weaning and yearling weights. I am the one that works them; sometimes I get help from my husband, but if he’s not around, I do it by myself.”

As if that isn’t enough to keep Dana busy, she also volunteered her time for the Kansas Polled Hereford Association, of which she was vice president, until the group voted to go dormant for the next three years. However, she is a member of the Kansas Hereford Association, as well.

The majority of her volunteer time, though, is spent with the Kansas Farm Bureau. “I volunteer a lot of my time and services to travel for Kansas Farm Bureau,” Dana says. “I’ve been to Washington D.C. four times now. I have gone to help lobby and have also gone for committee meetings as I am on the American Farm Bureau advisory committee.”

Her greatest passion, Dana says, is spreading the word about agricultural practices and specifically, animal welfare issues. “I’ve been targeting vo-ag kids, but I have spoken to several farm organizations,” she says. “There is a lack of knowledge, even within producers and farmers, about what goes on outside our own little world.”

Dana is working to eliminate that lack of knowledge. She spoke about animal welfare at the Kansas Polled Hereford Association annual meeting, as well as at several Farm Bureau meetings.

However, the education mustn’t stop with those already involved in agriculture, Dana says. “One of the things that I think is extremely

important is that consumers need to know what it is that we do for a living. In the end we are all trying to raise food for the consumer, and it is extremely important that we reach out to the urban folks. When we have groups like the Humane Society of the United States and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that are constantly trying to change the way we do things and put more restrictions on cattlemen, it makes it extremely difficult to operate. We really need to explain to people how and what we do for a living because we are getting a huge gap between the farm people and the city people and they really don’t understand what we do.”

Another challenge, Dana says, is that most agricultural awareness groups rely heavily on volunteers. “Whereas groups like the Humane Society and PETA have large amounts of money and they can pay people to say whatever they want them to say. That’s why I’ve been volunteering, because I’ve



Dana with her husband, David, daughter, Cady, and son, Cody.



Dana regularly speaks about agriculture and animal welfare issues to help inform the public.

realized that there is a need out there to educate people.”

Dana says it’s not easy to juggle her volunteer time with getting things done at home, but she stresses, “If it’s important enough to you, you’ll find a way to get it done.”

It doesn’t take long to figure out what is important to Dana. “I always knew that I was going to come back to my grandparents’ operation. I always knew that I wanted to take it over someday.” Since there were no males in the family interested in managing the cattle part of the operation, Dana quickly learned how to do what needed to be done. “I have a very strong-willed mother and grandmother, so I kind of come by that naturally.”

That strong will has helped Dana with everything from giving presentations to working on the farm and ranch. “Most of the meetings that I go to are predominately male, and I am one of the few women, but I can’t say I’ve ever had any problems with that,” Dana says. “Sometimes the women are the ones that are more outspoken and are able to say what needs to be said. I don’t take a lot of guff off of people, and I like to stand my ground.”

She stands her ground when hard work needs to be done as well. “I know a lot of men think [farming and ranching] is a lot of work and women can’t do it all, but I am as capable of doing things as any man is. I may not be the greatest at fixing and maintaining equipment, but I can do everything a man can do.” **HW**