

Forages are Key at Pleasurewoods Farm

Duane and Sheila Munsterteiger, owners of Pleasurewoods Farm (www.pwfnaturalbeef.com), have been in the farming business for years. Duane has been working with cattle for more than 40 years and has been raising crops for more than 30. Located near Ogilvie, MN, Pleasurewoods Farm specializes in “all natural cattle” and beef products, which means the Munsterteigers rely heavily on alfalfa and other forages to produce the highest quality beef.

Duane grew up on a hobby farm and has fond memories of riding in a cattle truck with his dad. “I was a ‘wanna-be’ farmer,” says Duane. “I took my first loan in 7th grade to buy Holstein calves and started raising steers on the Tenderlean program. I eventually built enough equity to switch over to beef cattle.”



Duane and Sheila Munsterteiger.

The Munsterteigers farm approximately 1,000 acres, roughly half of which they own. The other half, mostly pasture, is rented.

They have 120 Black Angus cows plus offspring. The yearlings are intensively grazed and the cows are rotated on pasture. Last year, their first yearlings were sold at 17 months of age with an average carcass weight of 600+ lbs.

Because of personal health issues and the growing trend of healthier eating, which has led to an increase in demand for grass-fed beef, they transitioned to raising “all natural” beef – no antibiotics or implants and fed nothing but forages (with the exception of those customers who request corn-finished beef). “We are trying to teach our kids the importance of ‘green’ farming and the benefits it provides us as individuals, our animals, and our family. We have taken on the challenge and obligation to produce ‘natural beef’.”

Their animals calve in late spring and rotationally graze on fresh pastures all summer and fall. In winter, they are fed hay diets. Feeders are fattened on intense alfalfa grazing all summer. “We finish our beef cattle on grass, baleage, and apple cider vinegar for high weight gain.”

The Munsterteigers grow alfalfa, grasses, and oats on their sandy loam soils, rotating in soybean for cash and soil building. Duane also uses cover crops to manage soil erosion, fertility, and health. When planting alfalfa, Duane seeds in spring and tries to seed into soybean ground using a field cultivator, seeding with fertilizer and packing it down. He tends to plant grasses with his alfalfa in a mixture of brome, orchard, tall fescue, and meadow fescue. In addition to alfalfa/grass mixtures, he has good results frost-seeding crimson clover in pastures.

Duane’s fertilizer regimen includes foliar and dry fertilizers. Last year he fertilized poorer ground with wood ash (by-product of nearby papermill) and lime. He recently started using turkey manure with great results. Additionally, he does his best to maintain appropriate soil pH levels. “I’ve found the most important management component for me is the soil pH level. I try to keep it as close to 7 as possible.”

Duane uses a Kuhn discbine, an H&S V-rake, a John Deere Silage Special baler, and an H&S line wrapper to put up his hay. He has made a bus-frame trailer with semi-hitch dollies on the front, which works well to transport 4’x6’ bales from the field. “We cut, rake, bale, and wrap all in the same day if possible. I feel this results in better quality hay and is much easier on the stand.” Wrapped bales are usually stored close to the feeding sites, leaving room for the dry hay to be stored inside.



He typically takes three cuttings with the last one the end of August, providing late-season grazing. Average yield is close to 7 tons/ac, and he produces 1,000-1,200 tons/year. Quality is the main determinant of how long he keeps stands in production. As a beef farmer, he tries to get at least 8-9 years out of most of his stands. Duane does not sell a lot of hay but will, from time to time, sell to local dairy farmers if the price is attractive. He generally utilizes most of his hay for his own animals.

Duane seeks out as much information as he can. “I don’t rely on any one person for my agronomy needs, but I ask a lot of questions of a lot of people, and I read everything I can get my hands on.” Duane is active in a number of organizations, including the Snake River Valley, Minnesota, and National Cattlemen’s Associations; Farm Bureau; Minnesota Beef Council; and, of course, the Midwest Forage Association, which he credits with helping him better manage his operation through the latest forage-related news and information.