



NICHOLS

NEWSLETTER

ROSS' THOUGHTS



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Data that Pays

As all of you know, this past year has reminded us – again – that raising cattle has never been cheap, and it certainly isn't getting any cheaper. When you're trying to keep a program profitable in today's environment, the margins get tighter and the decisions get more important.

That's why I keep coming back to something we've believed in for a long time at Nichols Farms: good data makes good cattle, and good cattle save money for the people who rely on them.

Over the past several years, we've made major investments in two areas that hit the pocketbook the hardest: BRD resilience and feed efficiency. These are big topics in the beef world right now. But around here, they aren't buzzwords – they're things we measure every day, and they're traits our customers tell us matter more than ever. Anyone who has fed calves knows how discouraging it is to have one break with BRD. It's not just the treatment cost and the time, it's watching that calf lose momentum.

That's why we've tracked treatment records, health outcomes, and genetic markers for years, building a clearer

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Bart Mostaert: The Quiet Force Reshaping the Simmental Breed

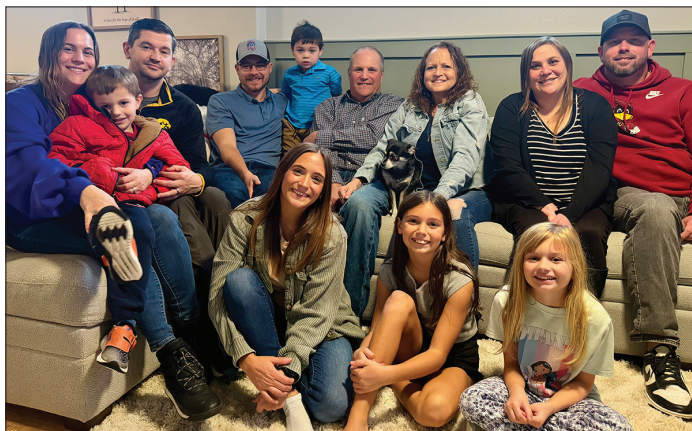
Bart Mostaert is a 44-year team member at Nichols Farms that oversees the overall cowherd, with personal responsibility for the Simmental herd. Ross Havens describes Bart as a very modest gentleman, that serves as the glue that keeps Nichols Farms running smoothly on a day-to-day basis. What many people don't realize is the personal impact Bart has had on the Simmental breed.

Bart grew up in eastern Iowa in Clarence, Iowa, and attended Hawkeye Tech Community College from 1979-1981. While at Hawkeye, he did an internship in the spring of 1980 with Nichols Farms, which would end up setting the course of his professional life. Bart got to work mostly with the late Lee Nichols and Phyllis Nichols helping with the cattle and calving out the first calf heifers. Upon graduation, Bart was then hired by Nichols Farms to be one of the farm's herdsman. It was the perfect fit for Bart as his wife, Jill, was from Southwest Iowa. Dave Nichols really didn't think the farm needed another hand, but Lee told Dave when you find someone this good you hire them whether you need them or not.

So, Bart started his career at Nichols Farms in 1981, and one of the benefits of working at Nichols Farms is you get to keep a cow at the farm at no expense for each year you have worked there. Bart had an opportunity to purchase a heifer from his brother and asked if he could bring her to Nichols Farms. Although he didn't have his first year's tenure yet, the Nichols family gave Bart permission. Phyllis Nichols then asked Bart what breed makeup was the heifer? Bart said she was a three-quarters Simmental heifer but had not been papered yet. Phyllis told him to find out her sire and dam, and she would help him get the heifer registered. The heifer was registered as Nichols Kelly 115N, sired by Oil and dam Kelly 26J raised by Bert Kelly, Kelly Cedar Farms LTD. Clarence, Iowa. This was unknowingly something very special for the Simmental breed, Bart, and Nichols Farms.

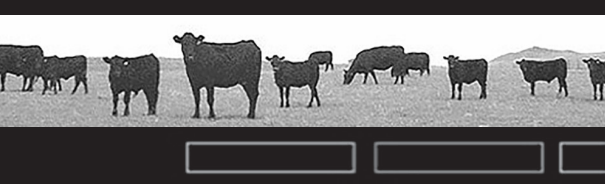
At first, Nichols Kelly 115N just became another cow at Nichols Farms and did what she was supposed to do – breed, calve, and raise a calf every year. In her time at the farm, she raised 5 bulls and 3 heifers. As these heifers were registered and kept in the herd, Bart put the heifers in his three girls' names – Sarah, Krista and Alison – and the income out of the heifers would go towards their college fund. Two of Nichols Kelly 115N's daughters, Nichols Kelly 99W and Nichols Kelly 75U, would become foundation females in the Simmental breed, appearing in 85 percent of today's registered black Simmentals.

Nichols Kelly 75U really got things started when her son, Nichols Black Advantage Z89, became one of the most



As Bart raised his family at Nichols Farms, he also raised the bar for Simmental genetics, leaving a legacy that strengthened both Nichols Farms' operation and the breed. Pictured are Bart, his wife Jill, daughters Sarah, Krista and Alison, and their families.

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Cowboys You Can Count On



Hannah Antisdal takes care of data entry at Nichols Farms. Among her duties is entering breed association database information, a constant learning experience.

"Mostly I deal with cows on the computer," she says to describe her job. "I learn something new every day, and appreciate the role data plays in the beef production process." She began her duties in late 2022.

Aside from working at Nichols Farms, Hannah is a hairdresser, her profession since 2011.

Married to Nichols Farms' Alex Antisdal, she keeps busy on the farm raising 4 kids, age 3-9, the oldest 2 beginning their showmanship adventures with bucket-bottle calves. "I have a lot to learn there," says Hannah.

Many of the family's activities revolve around an extensive network of extended family in the area. Hannah was raised in Fontanelle, Iowa, and graduated from Nodaway Valley High School.

At home, she enjoys cooking and canning when she's not chasing the kids.

Hannah takes her place in a proud tradition. Nichols Farms has employed an Antisdal since 1977. Hannah and Alex live on the Nichols home place.

Recent Beef Checkoff-funded research adds to a growing body of evidence reinforcing the important role fresh beef plays in a healthy, sustainable diet. Texas Tech University researchers conducted a comprehensive analysis of available research on the relationship between unprocessed red meat intake and obesity, finding no significant effect of such intake on weight gain or related metabolic issues in adults.

~Research funded in part by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) and the Texas Beef Council (TBC).

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Nick Hammett
Neogen Beef Genomics

Invest Now, Thank Us Later

As I write this, cattle prices remain near historical highs. Yes, there was a recent dip, but we seem to be past that and back on track. The cattle cycle is what it is - largely driven by supply and demand, with a sprinkle of politics, trade negotiations, and the occasional random event beyond our control. The one thing we know for certain: historical highs don't last forever.

Those of us in agriculture deserve good times. In fact, we rely on them to recover from all the years we've spent working our tails off just to break even. The decisions we make during these profitable times are what truly prepare us for the future and set up our operations for the multi-generational sustainability most of us are striving for.

During these good times, we often see major investment in infrastructure - new equipment, sheds, working facilities, fences, water systems, and more. These are all things we've held together with duct tape and baling wire, waiting for the right time to make improvements. These investments are both necessary and justified, especially as labor shortages continue to challenge our operations. Upgrading infrastructure to make tasks more efficient is a logical move.

But what about your cowherd itself? What are you doing today to prepare your herd for tomorrow?

Many producers are choosing to invest some of their profits in genetics - buying higher-dollar and hopefully "better" bulls. But first, it's important to define what "better" really means. Are maximum growth and carcass traits the genetics that will carry you through the bottom of the cycle? Maybe - if you purchase replacements and retain ownership on everything.

If that's not your model, perhaps a more profitable approach is crossbreeding while combining optimal growth and carcass traits with cost savings from improved feed efficiency and better herd health. Whatever your strategy, know what truly drives your profitability, and buy the best genetics you can afford now to set yourself up for future success.

However, bulls are only half the equation. What if you used today's profits to invest in the right females - whether purchased or home-raised? Commercial females selected with genomic tools can help you build a herd designed to do more with less. By investing in genomics today, your future cowherd could be more fertile, have a lower replacement rate, and increased productivity through the use of carefully designed profitability indexes.

If you're interested in learning more, talk with Ross about Igenity Beef and how it can help prepare your herd for the markets of tomorrow.



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Contact Ross Havens for more information.

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Bart's Simmentals continued from page

heavily used bulls in the breed. She also had another famous son, Nichols Black Destiny D12, which was No.1 Registrations in 2000. He was leased to Genex and served as one of the main reference sires in the Carcass Merit DNA Validation Program.

These two sisters came back together in the pedigree of the bull Nichols Legacy G151, which was sired by Nichols Destiny D12 (a son of Nichols Kelly 75U) and out of the dam Nichols Debra D81 (a granddaughter of Nichols Kelly 99W). A half interest in G151 was sold to the famous Simmental herd of Tom Hook's, and the bull was leased to Select Sires. The Nichols Legacy sire line has claimed the title of No.1 for Simmental registrations in the U.S. from 2006-2010 and 2012-2020. Among Nichols Legacy G151's famous sons was CNS Dream On L186, who was No.1 in U.S. registrations from 2006-2010. Dream On also sired Mr Hoc Broker who led the breed in registrations in 2016.

Another son, Hook's Shear Force 38K, ranked No.3 in registrations 2011, and sired the No. 2 bull in registrations from 2018-2019. He was also the grandsire of CCR Cowboy Cut 5048Z and TJ Franchise 451D, which combined led the breed in registrations from 2017 to 2020. Hook's Shear Force would also have a profound impact in Leachman's Stabilizer composite program.

The 75U cow was sold in Nichols 1992 Mature Cow Herd Dispersion and continued to have a breed-wide impact both in the U.S. and internationally. To put it mildly, her influence on the Simmental breed over the years has been astounding.

Bart Mostaert continues to grow his herd here at Nichols Farms, and assists in selecting sires that will be used A.I. in the Nichols Simmental herd. According to



Bart doing what he does best - working with cattle.

both Ross and Lillian, Bart is the most honest and hardworking man they have ever been around and only does things that will make everything better, whether it is his family, friends, fellow employees or the cow herd he oversees. He doesn't seek the limelight or recognition that someone that has had the impact on Nichols Farms and the Simmental breed deserves, but quietly goes about the daily business of helping keep Nichols Farms running as the well-oiled machine that it is.

by Bob Hough



Don't miss a bit of Nichols News!

You can have the Newsletter and e-news blasts sent directly to your inbox.

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nichols@nicholsfarms.biz



by **Brian Fieser Ph.D.**

Beef Field
Nutritionist,
ADM Animal
Nutrition™

Roller Coaster Goes Up and Down

Over the past few years, everyone in the cattle business has been on a roller coaster ride that seems to only have ups, with very rare downs, if any! The fundamentals of the beef industry remain basically unchanged, low supply of beef due to the smallest U.S. cow herd in decades combined with the highest per capita beef consumption (demand) since the 1970s results in record cattle prices. However, in the past month or so we have learned that this roller coaster not only goes up, but can have some downs, too. All it takes is someone saying “Argentinian beef” or “New World screwworm” or even just the whims of folks who probably have never fed a cow, only ate one. This means that while there are some downs we haven’t seen in a while, we are still near the top of the ride and should remain there for some time. How long will it stay high - is a question that creates uncertainty and anxiety in cattle producers. Regardless of when we see wide spread heifer retention and cow herd rebuilding, the fundamentals of cattle production remain unchanged as well: raise them right, get them bred, keep them alive, and grow them big and fast! As with previous cow inventory cycles, a tremendous opportunity exists to improve the genetic potential of our cow herd, as well as bull battery. Anyone who has bought a bull or bred females lately knows that the calf prices being at the high point on the roller coaster are translating to the seedstock markets as well. To paraphrase Winston Churchill and Uncle Ben from Spiderman: With great investment comes great responsibility!

Generational nutrition refers to the concept that a cow’s nutrition during gestation can positively or negatively impact the development, health, and long-term productivity of her offspring and future generations. We are paying historic prices for the genetics and need to ensure that we don’t compromise their productivity by shorting them on proper nutrition. This encompasses all aspects of nutrition from protein and energy to proper vitamin and mineral supply and balance. This investment has the potential to generate significant dividends, but without the necessary nutrition they will fall short of our expectations and risk not expressing the superior genetic traits we have invested in and developed.



While high prices punch more tickets to ride the roller coaster, there is more opportunity than at any point in history to make money and ride the ride. Maybe even buy the whole amusement park!



Cowboys You Can Count On



Madsen Lange says “Pretty much everything I do involves 4 legs and a moo.”

At Nichols Farms he helps with the Angus cows, delivers bulls, tackles routine maintenance and just about anything else that comes along. He’s happiest when out checking cows or selling bulls to customers.

“I like meeting new people and my dad always says I could sell ice to an Eskimo.”

His off hours are filled with raising club calves, going to cattle shows, and spending time with his fiancé. Those pursuits often overlap. She’s in on the dream.

Madsen lives near Harlan, Iowa, where he grew up around cattle, feedlots, and the show ring.

He raised and sold his first chickens and cattle at age 15. Then learned more about cattle and sheep. Now at age 23, he breeds show cattle with his own herd of around 35 cows.

For Madsen, working at Nichols Farms means more learning.

“Every operation does things a little differently,” he says. “One thing about Nichols Farms – they take good care of their cattle, and it shows.”

LEFT -- Nichols Farms was honored with the Iowa Farm Environmental Leader Award on August 13 at the Iowa State Fair. The award recognizes “the exemplary voluntary efforts of Iowa’s farmers as environmental leaders committed to healthy soils and improved water quality.”

“As environmental leaders, these farmers have adopted best management practices and incorporated environmental stewardship throughout their farming operations. True stewards of the land, they recognize that improved water quality and soil sustainability reaps benefits that extend beyond their fields to reach the citizens of Iowa and beyond, and have made environmental stewardship a priority on their farms,” according to a spokesman for the award. The Iowa Governor’s office, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources partnered on the award effort that honored 40 Iowa farms at this year’s fair. Recipients were also chosen for their leading by example in encouraging others to follow the path of environmental stewardship.

In Nichols Farms’ more than 80 years of raising cattle and farming in Southwest Iowa, many acres have been restored to row-crop productivity through pasture conservation methods, allowing cattle to help improve soil health. Along with cover crops, buffer strips, and no-till, they have installed 35 farm ponds and more than 9.5 miles of terraces.

Pictured R to L: EPA Regional Administrator Jim Macy, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Ross Havens, Bailey Lillard, Micayla Lillard (Ross’ granddaughters), Lillian Nichols, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, and Iowa Director of Natural Resources Kayla Lyon.



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ROSS' THOUGHTS

More THOUGHTS ...continued from page 1

picture of which cattle stand up to BRD pressure and which lines do it year after year.

Because when cattle stay healthy, everything gets easier. Pens stay more uniform. Labor gets freed up. You don't drain time or money doctoring the same calves more than once. And in a world of higher input costs, avoiding even a handful of pulls can make a noticeable difference.

Feed efficiency is a trait that doesn't make headlines, but it quietly makes or breaks profitability.

Thanks to years of C-Lock data and close tracking of individual intake, we've built one of the deeper feed-efficiency datasets in the beef seedstock world. We know which families of cattle convert better, which ones gain faster, and which ones do it without sacrificing carcass or fertility.

The payoff is simple: Cattle that convert better reduce cost of gain - even when grain prices climb. A .01 reduction in feed conversion is a savings of \$50 during a feeding period.

When we combine healthier cattle with more efficient cattle, we give our customers a tool they can feel. They see fewer treatments, cattle that stay on feed, more uniform loads, and they finish cattle that hang up right.

That's exactly what we're trying to deliver - cattle that don't require excuses, especially when conditions are tough and the cost of doing business is high.

We're proud of the progress we've made, but we're even more excited about where it's heading. Every year we add more records, more accuracy, and more confidence in the cattle we sell. And every year, those traits become more valuable.

As a family and as a team, we've always believed in building cattle that work for real cattlemen. The data we're collecting today is helping us raise cattle that reduce the cost of production in a time when every dollar truly matters.

Thank you for being part of the Nichols Farms family and I would like to invite you to purchase your next BRD Resilient and Feed Efficiency Bull at the Nichols Opening Day Bull Sale on January 24.

Nichols Farms

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