



Grassroots

District 4 News

Why “Thank You” Matters More Than Ever



Jenn Rittenhouse

District 4 Coordinator

Remember as a child when you were constantly told to say “thank you?”

You can never say thank you enough! It’s like too much chocolate; there is no such thing! Being thankful in a time when gratitude seems to be fading can feel like swimming against the current.

Everywhere we look, the pace of life is accelerating – deadlines closing in, screens demanding attention, conveniences available at the tap of a finger. In this fast-paced world, appreciation often becomes an afterthought. Yet, the very things that sustain us, especially the food we eat, are the products of immense dedication, labor and sacrifice. Recognizing this truth can restore a sense of fulfillment that many find increasingly difficult to access.

Consider the journey of food before it ever reaches our plates. Behind every piece of produce, grain or protein is you, the farmer who has devoted your life to cultivating it. You sometimes rise before dawn, labor through harsh weather, navigate unpredictable markets and make continuous investments in equipment, land and sustainability practices – all to provide healthy options for consumers. Your work is physically demanding and emotionally taxing. Still, the contributions often go unnoticed or undervalued because the modern world has grown so accustomed to speed and convenience.

But the journey doesn’t end at the farm. Countless others ensure that food moves safely and efficiently along the supply chain. Packers, drivers,

warehouse workers, grocery clerks and cooks all play essential roles in getting nourishment to our tables. The process of growing, producing, packaging, shipping, storing and preparing food is immense – and yet we rarely pause to appreciate the many hands that make these everyday miracles possible.

So why, with so much to be grateful for, does fulfillment feel increasingly elusive? Part of the answer lies in the culture of consumption that surrounds us. As society becomes more focused on instant gratification, the sense of value tied to hard work and patience begins to erode. When everything is available quickly, it becomes harder to recognize the effort behind it. Convenience can create complacency.

Additionally, our attention is often pulled in countless directions, leaving little room for reflection. Gratitude requires presence – a moment to pause, observe and acknowledge. When life feels rushed or overwhelming, those moments become rare. The disconnect between abundance and appreciation grows wider.

Yet, choosing thankfulness can restore that connection. Gratitude grounds us. It slows the frantic pace of life, helping us recognize humanity behind the goods we consume and the experiences we enjoy. When we mindfully acknowledge you, the farmers who care for the soil, the workers who keep shelves stocked and the cooks who prepare meals with love, we rediscover fulfillment in the simplest parts of daily life.

Especially during this season of the holidays, I thank each of you! Thank you for being you, doing what you do and thank you for you!

Through gratitude, fulfillment becomes not just possible, but abundant.



Step Up and Speak Out: Agriculture Needs You at the Table



Nate Zimdars

WFBF Director of Local Government

Two of the most important parts of life that affect every person in the world are agriculture and politics.

Everyone needs to eat and agriculture is the source of almost all the food we eat. Everyone also lives in a country that has different levels of government and rules that affect our day-to-day lives. Many consider agriculture to be the backbone of the United States. In Wisconsin, our identity as a strong agricultural state means that government, whether we like it or not, will have a role to play in how our food gets from field to table.

One of the greatest challenges that we face when discussing government involvement in agriculture is that far too many of the people tasked with making decisions do not have a strong agricultural background. Just a few decades ago, it was commonplace for many of our state's rural residents to have grown up on a farm or at least had parents and grandparents who were raised on farms. This was reflected among the members of the Wisconsin legislature and our county or town boards.

That is not the current reality when looking at the backgrounds of our elected officials.

While that isn't the most surprising given the number of people actively farming in Wisconsin has dropped, agriculture is still very much the lifeblood of rural Wisconsin. So, you would think that our county and town boards are full of farmers and agricultural workers, right? My work in local government would suggest otherwise.

When Farm Bureau members reach out to me about local issues or I am made aware of an ordinance that will have a significant impact on agriculture, those are taking place in the rural parts of our state, not on the edge of our large urban centers like Madison or Milwaukee. A key reason for that is we do not have officials with the deepest knowledge of agriculture making those important decisions.

This is where YOU come in. There is no one better than YOU to serve as a positive voice for agriculture on your county or town board. YOU know your community better than I ever will. YOU understand the challenges affecting agriculture in your backyard better than a town board member who isn't connected to agriculture.

Serving on a board is a time commitment and time is our most precious resource, especially when you are juggling responsibilities to your farm, family, or an off-farm job. But attending meetings to voice your concerns about a local issue and staying to listen to the board discussion is also a time commitment. The only difference is that you ultimately don't get to decide on the ordinance that will affect your farm or business when it comes time to vote. So why not get in the driver's seat and have some control over the direction your town or county is moving in?

We need more Farm Bureau members serving on our town and county boards. Our Farm Bureau vision states that we are "the trusted voice leading Wisconsin agriculture forward." The only way we remain that strong voice is by having members using their voices to shape local decisions that will ensure agriculture remains strong and valued in our state.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter." You have a role to play in our political process. Don't remain silent. Use your voice to speak up for agriculture.

Some Things Never Change



Joe Bragger

District 4 Director

I was recently asked about the View from the Control Tower, the articles that former District Director Gary Steiner would write.

"Could you put one of those into the newsletter for old times' sake?"

The person must be tired of reading mine!

As I went through some of his old writings from the 1990's it struck me that the issues we face just keep recirculating. GATT that was mentioned, dates back to 1947 and was designed to help Europe recover after WWII and was being reviewed in the early 1990's leading to NAFTA.

Now we hand out tariffs like Oprah Winfrey handing out books or cars on her show, "A tariff for you, a tariff for you, why not a tariff for everyone... *applause* and now a commercial break for our sponsors."

As farmers, we need trade and are hostage to agreements with other countries often getting the short end of the stick while supporting other industries' advantages. Well, just remember the Boston Tea Party, we have been disputing trade since before our nation was founded.

I hope you enjoy this articulation from over thirty years ago!

From the Farm Bureau Archives

View from the Control Tower Former District 4 Director Gary Steiner

VIEW FROM THE CONTROL TOWER

We have watched and supported the development of the G.A.T.T. talks from the beginning. Originally GATT was the acronym for General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs with the European common market nations. It has become a General Agreement To Talk. Nothing has been accomplished other than the continuation of the talking. There doesn't seem to be anything in the future that will change that stalemate.

The animosity between the Germans is barely beneath the surface despite the re-unification. The Dutch don't like or trust the Germans. Nobody, over there, can deal with the French. You still have nine other countries that have to be brought into some kind of cooperative stance before they will be willing to even consider some concessions to fair trade with the Americans.

The Europeans have, nearly all, endured the privation of the two World Wars in addition to several local disputes throughout history. They will continue to support and subsidize their farm economy. They are not interested in a 'level world trading field.' Their food shelves are stocked. They know agriculture is the backbone of their economy and their present well-being. They are grateful, and they will pay the price to maintain their farm economy. This attitude is not likely to change because we want to trade with them at an economic level that is, in fact, breaking our farm economy.

It would seem that our best hope for an agricultural export market lies in the recent N.A.F.T.A. agreement. The North American Free Trade Alignment would enhance our markets with Mexico and Canada and probably lead into Central and South America. The Mexican market is there and they have a wealth of undeveloped resources to trade with us.

We have a warehouse of condensed milk in Germany, that would fill my yard, and it was being shipped to Mexico. If there is any reason behind our struggle to sell dairy products to Germany, at any price, while we are ignoring the Mexican market it escapes me. And it's a considerable market, since they buy about 25% of West Germany's export of dairy product. Transportation alone should be reason enough to cultivate the Mexican market. Mexico has abundant oil reserves that we should be willing to trade for agricultural and industrial products. As we help them build their economy we will be enhancing our own because their cheap labor will be willing to stay south of the border. It would be more beneficial to lift their economy than to allow them to keep lowering ours -- and a leveling will be reached, one way or the other.

District 4 News

Thank You, Rural Mutual Insurance Agents!

As we wrap up another successful membership year, we want to extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to our partners at Rural Mutual Insurance.

Rural Mutual agents continue to play a critical role in the strength of Wisconsin Farm Bureau. Their support, advocacy and dedication to connecting with farm families and rural businesses has made a meaningful difference in both member engagement and member growth. Each conversation, each referral, and each moment spent sharing the value of Farm Bureau contributes directly to our mission.

This year's membership results reflect the power of teamwork and shared purpose. Rural Mutual agents not only help protect Wisconsin farms and rural communities, they also help invest in their future by encouraging involvement in Farm Bureau programs, events and grassroots policy work.

We appreciate your partnership, your professionalism and your ongoing commitment to building a stronger rural Wisconsin.

Thank you for helping make this membership year a great one!

Wisconsin
Farm Bureau
FEDERATION

A Unified Voice for Agriculture

As the leading voice for Wisconsin agriculture, WFBF ensures that farmers' concerns are heard and addressed, allowing you to focus on what you do best—feeding, clothing and fueling our communities.

Shaping Policy

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation champions policies that protect farmers' rights, making sure that agriculture remains a thriving industry through proactive engagement at all levels of government.

Developing Members

Members gain access to leadership development, business resources and networking opportunities designed to help farmers expand their businesses and influence.

Engaging Consumers

Through outreach and education, WFBF bridges the gap between farmers and consumers, promoting a deeper understanding of modern agriculture and its role in everyday life.

1241 John Q. Hammons Dr.
P.O. Box 5550
Madison, WI 53705
(608) 836-5575

**Join WFBF Today
or Pay Your Dues**

SAVE THE DATE

Ag Day at the Capitol will take place on Wednesday, January 21, 2026

For additional details visit wfbf.com/events/ag-day-at-the-capitol



RIDE TOGETHER TO AG DAY!

Carpooling options are available from Northwestern Wisconsin to make attending Ag Day at the Capitol easier and more fun!

Contact Katie Richartz
District 9 Coordinator
krichartz@wfbf.com | 715.418.0975

Or sign up for a carpool option at bit.ly/2026AgDayCarpool





Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

WISCONSIN BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE CERTIFICATION IN - PERSON TRAINING

BQA Certification is valid for three years. This training enables the participant to obtain an initial certification or re-certify an expired certification.



Feb. 16, 2026 | Eau Claire County Extension Office, 227 1st Street West, Altoona, WI

Check-in at 6:00 pm, class begins at 6:30 pm

Pre-registration is encouraged and will make check-in faster. Register online at <https://tinyurl.com/2hr5karf> or call Wisconsin Beef Council at 1-800-728-2333.

The voluntary Beef Quality Assurance Program assists in raising, feeding and harvesting high-quality beef. By participating in BQA and adopting BQA production practices, you are helping to answer the call from consumers for safe beef raised in a humane manner. Buyers representing some large packers and processors (including Tyson) will only purchase from farms selling beef breed type finished cattle that are BQA or FARM Certified. Your current BQA Certification maintains interest from buyers of beef breed type finished cattle.



SCAN ME

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, University of Wisconsin – Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. Please request reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to educational programs as early as possible preceding the scheduled program, service or activity by calling the Extension office hosting the event.

District 4 News

UW-Extension: Beginners Beef Special

Is beef production in your future? Maybe you are new to beef production or perhaps you are a dairy producer thinking about adding or transitioning to cow-calf production. If so, then join the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Beef School for Beginners. Six, free, 1 ½ hour online classes will be held from 7 - 8.30 pm in 2026 on January 27, 29, and February 3, 5, 10, and 12.

Registration details coming soon and will be posted at <https://livestock.extension.wisc.edu/>

The **Noontime Beef Roundup** series is back over the coming winter and will occur at 7-8pm CST on the following dates:

- December 11th, 2025: Handling Facilities
- January 15th, 2026: Unlocking the Full Potential of Growth-Enhancing Technologies
- February 19th, 2026: Asian Longhorned Tick
- March 19th, 2026: Key Considerations for Rebuilding Your Cow Herd

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Livestock educators will be joined by industry experts from Texas A&M, Kansas State, Iowa State, and Nebraska. Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect with other producers and professionals in the beef industry.

To register for the webinar series, please visit this link:

https://uwmadison.zoom.us/join/register/Q_gUWguARbG-Tlt-yFARLQ



Heroes of Hope

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

NOMINATE A NEIGHBOR

Do you know a story of farm neighbors helping each other? Perhaps you helped out a neighbor or were helped by a neighbor during a difficult time. Nominate them today as a Hero of Hope!

Each month, one person, couple or organization will be recognized for the help they provide in their community.

Nominations are open and can be found at <https://bit.ly/FNCHeroHope>



#FarmNeighborsCare

District 4 YFA Award Finalists

35 Under 35 Program

The 35 Under 35 program recognizes the creativity and innovation of young farmers and agriculturists who are preserving agriculture through leadership in environmental, social and economic activities:

- **Erica Gentry**, Jackson; Sustainable Self
- **Brianna Wanek**, Monroe; Sustainable Storytelling
- **Matthew and Alexandra Olson**, Jackson; Sustainable Future

The Sustainable Future category recognizes individuals who are preserving generational success on the farm. The Sustainable Self category recognizes individuals serving their community through leadership, mentorship and mental health advocacy. The Sustainable Storytelling category recognizes individuals who use their platform to share agriculture's sustainability successes.

Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award

The Outstanding Agriculture Professional Award recognizes YFA members who excel in their agriculture involvement, leadership abilities and participation in Farm Bureau and other civic and service organizations. Applicants are agriculturists who derive a majority of their income from an off-farm job.

- **Savannah Brown**, Jackson County – Senior Plant Manager at Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Solutions.

Discussion Meet Finalists

Discussion meet finalists include: **Andrea Rippley-Schlais**; Trempealeau County, **Emily Herness Oates**; Trempealeau County, **Cullen Schlewitz**; Eau Claire County. As a leadership training and self-improvement activity, the discussion meet experience will:

- Stimulate logical thinking and a desire for accurate information.
- Develop a concise and direct manner of speaking.
- Improve the ability to listen.
- Aid the participant in overcoming timidity or stage fright.
- Assist the individual in the practice of giving and receiving criticism in a helpful manner.
- Teach the value of compromise.
- Develop leaders for effective problem solving through group discussion.

Congratulations and best of luck to all our District 4 young leaders who will compete at the WFBF Annual Meeting!

Upcoming Events

January

- 20 - Council of Presidents
- 21 - Ag Day at the Capitol

February

- 11 - FFA Farm Forum
- 20 - Cultivate & Connect Pre-conference Activity
- 21 - Cultivate & Connect

March

- 3 - IGNITE Conference
- 3-4 Eau Claire Farm Show
- 13-16 - AFBF YF&R Conference
- 31 - Early Bird Membership Deadline**



-2026- FFA FARM FORUM

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

CENTRAL WISCONSIN CONVENTION & EXPO CENTER
Rothschild, WI



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- 8:00-10:00am - Registration and Chapter Photos
- 8:30-9:30am - Early Riser with FFA Officers (*Optional*)
- 10:00am - Program and Brunch
- 12:00-3:00pm - Concurrent Workshops
- 3:00pm - Closing Session
- 4:00pm - Adjourn and Travel Home

REGISTRATION:

- > STUDENTS - \$80
- > ADVISORS/CHAPERONES - \$40

REGISTER AT:

bit.ly/FFAFarmForum2026



#FarmNeighborsCare

GRANTS AVAILABLE

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Foundation will provide 10 - \$250 grants to support county Farm Bureau projects related to Farm Neighbors Care.

Application deadline is February 13, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.

Grant information and application can be found at <https://bit.ly/FNCgrant26>

Past grant recipient projects include:

- Community Meals & Gatherings – Hosting farmer appreciation breakfasts, grill-outs, or coffee socials where neighbors could gather, connect, and talk openly about farm stress and mental health.
- Training & Education – Providing mental health training for ag professionals, FFA advisors, and farm neighbors so they can better recognize and respond to stress warning signs.
- Resource Awareness – Printing and distributing pocket cards, flyers, or signage with farm stress resources (988, Farmer Wellness Helpline, Farm Center, etc.).
- Care Packages – Delivering small “neighbor care” boxes with snacks, wellness items, or gift cards to farmers facing difficult seasons.
- Youth Involvement – 4-H and FFA chapters creating service projects that show care for local farm families, such as freezer meals, thank-you cards, or stress-relief kits.

THESE PROJECTS AND GRANTS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SUPPORT OF MCCADE’S JOYRIDE AND THE WISCONSIN FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION

The Change of the Season



Ed Rippley

Buffalo County Farm Bureau President

When the season changes from the longest day of the year to the shortest days of the year, that is when Farm Bureau resolutions start coming out and Buffalo County Farm Bureau members start thinking about changes to policy.

Whether it is changing a word in the existing policy or writing a whole new one. Buffalo County collaborates with the other counties in District 4 to have more voting power behind the policy. For example, Jackson County would like to eliminate the elk herd in their county because the damage is not being funded by the DNR and the herd has grown so much. This is part of the state resolutions along with nine others.

There is a Policy Development team that meets to catalog the resolutions into Dairy, Education, Energy, Farm Finance, General Government, Health and Safety, Hunting and Wildlife, Labor, Land Use, Livestock, Marketing, Natural Resources and the Environment, Taxation, Technology and Transportation.

The county must pass the resolution at the county annual meeting and pick delegates for the WFBF Annual Meeting. The government relations team long with the Policy Development Committee present resolutions so delegates can vote on the policies at hand. Delegates from each county can support or express concerns during floor discussion. This is where we see our grassroots advocacy come into action.

Next August when the card comes in the mail for your county annual meeting, come and join us. If there is something that you don't agree with, voice your opinion and try to change it!

Ms. Christine Jumbeck, Forever an Ag Advocate

Kaleb Ellis

Buffalo County Farm Bureau Member

I was asked to say a few words about Ms. Jumbeck and how she has been an ag advocate for her entire life. She is the true definition of a leader. She is someone who guides and inspires the next generation of agriculturalists. She pushes students outside of their comfort zones so they can become successful. She has helped many students throughout her career as an ag teacher at CFC. She continued to help students at CFC after her retirement in 2021. She even went on to teach at the neighboring school in Alma where she has been for the past three years. She continues to work hard to get kids who are interested in agriculture and leadership involved in FFA.

She has helped me countless nights, outside of school hours, and even after graduation on my winning National FFA Proficiency Project. My biggest takeaway from her is something that is outside of agriculture; she always advocates that your success comes from your hard work and the people you know who want to see you succeed. She is willing to go above and beyond her "contract hours" to ensure the success and happiness of her students. She works hard to advocate for agriculture, and she does it by inspiring and leading the next generation of agriculturalists. Ms. Jumbeck has never been a huge fan of being recognized for all the above and beyond work that she does for the world of agriculture and our hometown community, but Ms. Jumbeck is beyond deserving of this recognition.



LISTEN ON:



Dessert Auction Raises Money for Scholarship

This year's annual meeting featured a new idea to raise money for the scholarship fund. We asked members to bring a dessert or item to be auctioned off. We raised just over \$600 to add to the scholarship fund. Each year the county will award scholarships to local graduating students. Keep your eyes out for the 2026 application and deadline.



Hayride Fun After the Annual Meeting

The group of members ready to take off and tour the farm. Thank you to the Groell's for hosting the meeting and hayride.



Representing Eau Claire County in D.C.

Eau Claire County Farm Bureau board member Cullen Schlewitz had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. Thanks for representing Wisconsin and sharing your voice for agriculture!



District 4 was well represented in Washington, D.C. with Cullen Schlewitz (Eau Claire County) and Dan Fremstad (Trempealeau County).



Congratulations to Our 2025 Animal Grant Recipients!

Savannah Kunes

Animal Grant Chair

We're thrilled to recognize the outstanding youth who have been awarded the 2025 Jackson County Farm Bureau animal grants! These young exhibitors have shown dedication, passion and a strong commitment to their livestock projects:

- Alexa Blaken
- Kole Trapp
- Beau Trapp
- Jackson Peterson
- Sam Everson
- Jacob Stuessel
- Levi Stuessel
- Sean Stetzer
- Carter Simonson
- Jay Stetzer
- Drew Stetzer
- Tanner Bue
- Kyra Bue
- Abigail Bue
- Kendall Bue

The Jackson County Farm Bureau continues to be a proud supporter of youth in agriculture. This year, we're sponsoring 15 exhibitors to help junior livestock exhibitors improve their projects—whether it's purchasing feed, animals or essential equipment.

These grants are open to exhibitors in dairy, swine, beef, goat, sheep, equine or poultry projects who will be showcasing their animals at the Jackson County or Wisconsin State Fair.

Let's give a big round of applause to these future leaders in agriculture!

Serving Food at the Livestock Auction

Thanks to all the buyers for supporting the next generation of farmers and agriculturists at the 2025 Livestock Sale. Board members had fun handing out food after the auction.



2025 Jackson County Outstanding Farm Family

The 2025 Jackson County Outstanding Farm Family went to Vaarendahl Dairy owned by Dave and Sherry Olson and Erica and Dominick Gentry!



NEW
LOGIN PROCESS
Member Information and Benefits

SCAN THE QR CODES BELOW

User Login Member Benefits

Welcome, Brianna

Brianna Wanek

Monroe County Farm Bureau YFA Chair

Hello everyone! I'm Brianna Wanek, the new YFA Chair for the Monroe County Farm Bureau. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I returned to my family's dairy farm, where I now work as a herdsman alongside my dad and grandpa every day. In addition to being a Farm Bureau member, I'm active in the Cashton FFA Alumni and the Association of Women in Agriculture Alumni. In my free time, I raise club lambs and run a TikTok account where I share snapshots of my daily life on the farm. I love being part of Farm Bureau because it has opened the door to friendships across the state and connections with incredible industry professionals. I was fortunate to attend the YFA D.C. Fly-In this past summer where I met inspiring members who encouraged me to get more involved at the local level. I'm excited to connect with other YFA chairs to plan an event together, so please feel free to reach out if you have ideas or would like to collaborate!



WFBF Promotion & Education Event

CULTIVATE & Connect

February 21st, 2026 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. in Neenah, WI

Keynote Speakers:

Marlene Eick, Ohio Farm Bureau

Annaliese Wegner, Modern Day Farm Chick

Optional pre-conference activity:

February 20th from 5 - 8 p.m.

Fox Valley Technical College



Scan to learn more
and register!

Feeding America While Rebuilding the Farming Legacy

Lindsay Kurth

Trempealeau County Farm Bureau Member

“Most people overestimate what they can accomplish in a year and underestimate what they can accomplish in a decade.”

When you're done reading this article, come back up and read this line again. Whatever your dream is, start today. Even if it's the smallest step.

Seventeen years ago (sounds like a long time, doesn't it) when I found my future husband, the future was broad and blank; neither of us knew what was in store for us. He had a farm and I always wanted a farm. Little did I know the work that a farm entailed; I was a town kid. I was a 4-H and FFA member without a farm, Brandon was a farm kid but not involved in 4-H and FFA. We had drastically different upbringings and probably more differences than similarities. Our early days together were spent in a tractor, choring and working on new ideas for his family farm. The Kurth family (originally from Germany) homesteaded the land in 1867 (that's 158 years ago). The buildings show the wear and tear of their age. This farm's appearance was not the shiny, fancy stuff. Four generations preceded us, and each Kurth generation had its ideas and ways to earn a living. We purchased the farm from Brandon's dad, Henry Kurth, in 2015. Farming had not been the sole focus for the previous generation and jobs in town were deemed necessary to make a living. The land, buildings, crops and cattle had been exhausted not only due to age but lack of time, energy and funds to apply to a farm that wasn't capable of supporting a family. This is the case for many farms today, the inability to support a family's cost of living, and in turn, is depleted until sold. This old farm simply looked like a sad future to some passersby.

We saw a diamond in the rough, a tiny little glimpse of a future farming together. It hasn't been easy, and it won't be easy to achieve the dreams we have, but to see how far we've come is quite shocking. We took over a herd of 30 beef cows and 280 acres of pasture and crops. As a young family with three kids, we pinched pennies, calculated each and every cost, counted the chickens before they hatched (some days) and dreamt of the future. Our goal was to maximize the potential of what 280 acres could produce for us. Finding the precise equation of crops and cattle to be most efficient. We retained heifers and purchased bulls to increase the herd of beef cattle, which led to the demand for picking up neighboring rented acres of cropland. Our three kids have watched us firsthand and usually lent a hand to build a future that can hopefully support their generation. Each of our kids takes a different interest on the farm, but they've all been part of our 4-H club and showing cattle, sheep or hogs at the county fair. Our oldest daughter has taken full advantage of all FFA has to offer, including public speaking, travel and grants to further her own growing cow herd.

In 2020, we began our investment in Angus genetics and quickly realized how much the cattle outperformed the commercial herd we began with. The Angus cattle themselves proved to be a good fit for our future. The end product for a beef farm is steak on the dinner plate. There are plenty of “meh” steaks and average burgers in the world, but we hold higher expectations. If the day-to-day work on the farm is the same, we want to be producing the

best beef we can. Up until 2014, we sold feeders (weaned calves) in the Fall. Brandon wanted to feed those calves to a finished state from feed we grew ourselves, avoiding the need to buy feed. As the herd grew, so was necessary for additional equipment and space for feeding cattle. It's a vicious cycle, like I said, get close to one goal, then set a new one. This led to transitioning the dairy barn the previous generations had used into a feed lot where weaned calves are fed a ration of grass and alfalfa with a supplement of corn. Again, all the feed put into the livestock is sourced from our owned or rented cropland. Brandon spends countless hours baling hay all summer to plan for the six-plus months of winter feeding. We utilize rotational grazing practices, selective breeding for feed efficiency and carcass quality to increase the potential of

our farm's capacity. The herd is now primarily Angus with some commercial cows that are still proving to raise a calf and be a sustainable part of the farm. Each of our kids is prospering in their personal strengths in different areas on the farm, whether its business ideas, operating equipment or researching the next bull's genetics. It's impressive to see the work ethic a kid has when they set their eyes on a bigger dream. We aren't farming for tomorrow, we're farming for five, ten and 50 years from now.

If the end result of raising beef is a great tasting steak, we are aiming to bring the best quality of Angus beef to the consumer. We don't believe in exporting our beef and importing others and we also believe that the farmer is still the backbone of America. In September 2025, we implemented the USDA Remote Beef Grading Program so our cattle butchered at the local plant (12 miles away) can be labeled for quality assurance. Our goal is to label our direct-to-consumer beef with the Certified Angus Beef Ranch to Table logo. Not all Angus are created equal, in fact only about three out of ten qualify for the brand's label. To qualify for Certified Angus Beef, the carcass

must be USDA Prime or Choice and meet ten more quality specifications. These specifications include factors like modest or higher marbling, age of the animal, size of the ribeye, minimal excess fat, no dark cutters and no neck hump. At our farm, we don't use hormones to increase growth; rather, we pay attention to a cow's milk supply and the ability to convert feed into pounds of meat. We partnered with the Certified Angus Beef Ranch to Table brand to add assurance for our customers looking for the best-tasting beef. At one time, we looked at expanding our cow numbers and acres, and that worked to get us to this point, but now it's time to bring quality and sustainability to the consumer's attention. It's important to be efficient in what we do for the longevity of our farming future. We've converted another old building on the farm into a farm store with frozen cuts of beef and tallow products. We also have a flock of Cormo and CVM sheep (known for their fine wool), English Angora rabbits, a group of butcher hogs and operate three broiler chicken barns.

The consumer's time is limited, and convenience is a priority, so we have an online store, free local delivery, shipping options and attend area farmer's markets. We're hoping to prove what hard work, determination and a goal can achieve. We're just simply working on rebuilding the farming legacy that was once relied on to feed America.



KURTH VALLEY FARM
Angus Beef

BRANDAN & LINDSAY KURTH
WHITEHALL WI 54773
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**This Issue Contains
Highlights for:**

Buffalo County

Eau Claire County

Jackson County

Monroe County

Trempealeau County



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*Rural Mutual Insurance
customers and Wisconsin Farm
Technology Days host*

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