

Future Blooming

Pasture grass isn't the only thing growing at Raines Farms.

Story & photos by **Bridget Beran**, editorial intern

Down the road from pastures of black Angus cattle, greenhouses full of flowers are in bloom. For Raines Farms, Seaman, Ohio, this is the perfect balance for their operation. Todd and Greg Raines are fifth-generation farmers, following in the footsteps of both sides of their family. The original Raines farm was started in 1928 and their mother's side of the farm, the Fultons, was settled in 1895. Todd and Greg have brought those farms together and added to the operation.

"Farming has always been a part of our family," Todd says.

They had been raising crossbred cattle until Todd finished college. Following his time acquiring an animal science degree and competing in livestock judging, Todd says he wanted to bring more predictability and focus to the cattle portion of the farm. Angus cattle were the perfect fit.

"The breed had more data and was more science-based than any others," Todd says. "There was a predictability in the genetics that I didn't see in any other breed. We started selling off our crossbred cows and buying Angus cows."

Starting off with a set of nine Angus heifers, extensive work put into artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer (ET) allowed Raines Farms to expand to just shy of 400 Angus cows.

Something new

Working with his father and brother Greg, Todd says they used to raise a lot of burley tobacco in the greenhouses. However, in the mid-1990s, when the government started to phase out tobacco programs, they realized they needed to find something else to put under the plastic. Greg and Todd came up with a colorful solution.



► After the tobacco business slowed, Raines decided to utilize their greenhouses for flowers instead.

"We started raising just a small amount of flowers, and my brother took them to different stores and gave them away in Cincinnati," Todd explains. "We gave florists there the opportunity to try out what we were producing and feel out the market."

These days they have four acres of flowers blooming and a solid market in Cincinnati. However, the blooms come with their own challenges, Todd says. While corn, soybeans and other crops are based on commodities, flowers require more legwork to develop a market.

"You have to convince people to buy your product. We have really had to market ourselves," Todd says.

Greg takes the lead on managing and marketing the flowers, leaving Todd with more time to take care of cattle, as well as raising corn, soybeans and tobacco. Todd says the beauty of their diversified operation is that each venture supports the others in case of low markets or problematic crop years. The added stability eases their minds,



► Working as a family has allowed the Raines family to diversify and expand, all while enriching their family bond. The Raines family are, (from left) Todd, Ty, McKayla and Melanie Raines.

Through Family



especially as Todd's children become more deeply involved in the day-to-day operations.

Family ties

Ty, 14, now takes the lead on freeze-branding and is involved in Aling procedures. Driving through the pasture, he can quickly point out which cows he freeze-branded, including which ones have his early work and which ones show off his

now more-experienced hand. Now that McKayla, 16, has her driver's license, she's been able to take charge of feeding cattle.

"I think it's important to give them responsibility. It builds character and keeps them out of trouble, most of the time," Todd says with a laugh. "They have recently started getting involved more so in the National

Junior Angus Association. They have been showing at [the] county fair for a while, and we attended the Eastern Regional this year. They've both been involved in the Ohio Junior Angus Association. There's a lot of opportunities and a lot of great programs for kids looking to further their experience in agriculture."

Family is key to the success at Raines Farms. From brothers working together on a daily basis to kitchen "roundtable" discussions between all three generations, there is no voice too small to contribute to the development of the operation.

"That generational aspect brings some great perspective," Melanie says. "The kids both learn stories about their dad from their grandpa that they wouldn't know otherwise and learn about cattle. At that kitchen table, the older generation and the younger generations all have input. I think that is so important. It fosters critical thinking on both sides. It's always an educational experience."

Working as a family has allowed the Raines family to diversify and expand, all while enriching their family bond. Todd references how working with his father and grandparents shapes his work now.



"I've always been a family person. My father and I work closely a lot on the farm still, and I had the opportunity to work alongside both of my grandparents. I got to really grow up working with my family, and that's something I think my kids will benefit from, as well," Todd says. "I take a lot of pride in the cattle. We will have neighbors come by and make a comment about how well they have come along, and that makes me really proud. But my grandpa Raines, who is 92, talked about how much improvement we've been able to make to the cows over the years, and that's a different level of pride when it comes from family."

The hopes for the next generation are what fuels the future of Raines farms, whether under plastic or in the pasture.

"We are always concerned about what we are leaving behind for our children," Todd says. "We've always strived to do the best we can with what we have."



Editor's Note: Bridget Beran was the summer 2016 publications intern for Angus Media.

► Todd is always focused on improving their herd.

