

Acquaintance Day Held at The Belted Cow Orchard



Back on Monday, March 28th, students from Monmouth-Roseville, United, and West Central High School FFA Chapters attended a Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau® Acquaintance Day event. Acquaintance Days programs are held to help foster relationships between FFA Chapters and Farm Bureau and show ways students can become involved with the organization. This event started off with a morning tour of The Belted Cow Orchard, located between Oquawka and Monmouth on Highway 164. When the Chapters arrived at the orchard, they were greeted by owners Sean and Marci Meyer.

After a round of delicious cake donuts (made fresh daily, starting at 3:00am), nearly 30 students and teachers bundled up for a brisk hayrack ride out into the pasture where Sean explained the day-to-day operations. Sean explained that Belted Cows (BueLingo) are easily distinguished by their white belt. Students got to feed the cattle corn while learning about the cattle's dietary needs, including nutrients such as salt, calcium, and other vitamins and minerals. The Meyers keep their cows out on pasture during this part of the year and supplement feed for the cows as the pasture cannot supply all the required daily feed consumption of the cows. Sean discussed how much supplemental feed is required per head per day and what feed stuffs are being fed: mostly hay and a little bit of corn. He also discussed the gestation cycle of the cows and when they typically calve during the year.

From the pasture, the students were taken to the feedlot area. Sean discussed the growing cycle of the calves: from being weaned off the cow to when they reach finish weight. There are different feed rations that feeder cattle are fed vs finish cattle. Feeder cattle require a larger percentage of their ration as roughage such as hay and are fed a small percent of corn. This weight range is usually from 500 to 800 lbs. Then from 800 lbs to roughly 1300 lbs, the percentage of the ration of corn increases. The reason for the increase in corn is to help with marbling. Increased marbling usually results in more flavor, moisture and tenderness.

After the cattle portion of the tour was complete, students rode up to the apple orchard. Marci took over teaching and explained how the orchard started back in 2016, with their store opening a year later. With over 5,000 trees and double-digit varieties, Marci said they have learned so much since they first started the orchard. The small-trunked trees are supported by a trellis system. Marci mentioned that running an apple orchard requires a lot of patience since trees may take up to 7 years to bear fruit. The varieties they grow include Honeycrisp, Kindercrisp, Golden Delicious, Gala, Pink Lady, and more, most recently including Ludacrisp. Be sure to stop by in the fall to taste-test different varieties!

After the tour, students listened to Jacob Baker and Justin Allaman, Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau Young Leaders, as well as Ag Education Coordinator, Anna Sharp, talk about the opportunities and benefits of Farm Bureau. Opportunities include scholarships, Young Leaders conference, the ALOT (Agriculture Leaders of Tomorrow) program, Young Farmers and Ranchers awards contests, networking, and engaging in issues that affect farmers' livelihoods.

If you have not made your way out to The Belted Cow Orchard, or even if you are a regular visitor, be sure to stop by soon! You can learn more about The Belted Cow Orchard and their various home décor

and food products, holiday specials, and business hours by visiting thebeltedcoworchard.com, searching for them on Facebook, or calling 309-371-4656. Many thanks to Sean and Marci for showing us their farm and orchard as well as sharing their knowledge with local FFA students!



Sean & Marci Meyer, owners of The Belted Cow Orchard.



Sean & Marci gave local FFA Chapters a tour of their farm an orchard on a chilly morning late in March.