

NOT YOUR TYPICAL CATTLEMAN



BY SARA NEUMEISTER COLLINS

What started out as a father's day present led to a way of life for U.S. Belted Galloway Society President Jon Bednarski. Bednarski is not your typical cattlemen. He doesn't have your typical background, your typical cow or your typical farming operation.

Unlike most cattle producers, he didn't grow up on a farm. In fact, it wasn't until father's day 2003 that he started his herd of 3 Belted Galloways (Belties) hoping his son would take an interest in showing. Turns out, it was Mr. Bednarski who fell in love with the

breed. Then, as a marketing guru, he decided to make a go of it with direct marketing.

Now, Bednarski has expanded his herd and enjoys nitch marketing to customers who are looking for all natural, hormone free, steroid free locally grown beef. His cattle are raised on rotational grazing pastures and supplemented with corn and soybeans at finish. "Specific benefits of Belted Galloway Beef, aside from its taste, are lower total fat, lower saturated fat, higher Omega 3 acids, a lower Omega 6 to Omega 3 ratio and approximately 40% less cholesterol than typical store bought beef," says Bednarski on his website. They offer

Individual Cuts Sample Packs, Quarters or Halves, Free delivery, or visit their retail store 'The World's Smallest Beef Shoppe' in La Grange, Kentucky. In every aspect of their business, they want to meet the needs of their customers. "We aren't looking to get huge," he adds "We are aiming for quality, not quantity. It is really rewarding to produce quality beef. Most customers say our beef 'tastes the way beef used to taste.'"

Belties themselves are something of a novelty. Sometimes called 'Oreo cows', their white middle is sandwiched between a primarily black, but also dun, or red front and back. Formed in the Galloway District of Scotland, hardiness

was a necessity. "Their coat has 4,000 hairs per square inch. This 'double coat' is what reduces fat in Belties," explains Jon.

Bednarski's father's day present turned into a hobby farm which turned into a business and has now become a passion. Most unusual is the fact that for a relatively new farmer, he's become successful in mastering environmental and beef herd management, marketing and business management and with under 10 years of farming under his 'belt', is already the President of the U.S. Belted Galloway Society. His main goal is to increase membership. One of his methods: touring the country to visit

Beltie farms in 48 states! He wants to get to know his members, become more visible, meet prospective members and become a vessel to share good ideas from producers nationwide. An ambitious undertaking, but nothing I would put past a man like Jon Bednarski.

What seems to be his secret to success? Open mindedness, hard work and education. If there's an article, Jon has read it. If there's an educational program, Jon has taken advantage of it. If there's a newer, better way to do it, you can bet that's what will happen at Sherwood Acres. He's fenced off waterways, created sacrifice lots, put automatic waterers in, used rotational grazing, has created nutrition plans for his cattle, and figured out how to market to his target which is all adding up to a lucrative second career.

I think many farmers can be guilty of having the *I'm doing it how grandpa did it and that's how it's going to be* attitude. In Bednarski's case, it almost seems to be an advantage that he wasn't raised on a farm. The newest programs were his only resources. There is no old

mindset for him to get stuck in. Instead his mindset is molded by programs such as Masters of Beef Advocacy and the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association's Leadership Program, where Bednarski credits much of his knowledge, marketing and leadership skills. "The biggest thing I learned was that we as a beef community need to promote beef as a whole. I realize I'm in a niche market and I am targeting a certain type of customer. My customers want beef raised naturally, hormone free and so on but that doesn't mean I market against traditional beef practices."

I think there are three important things we can all learn from Jon Bednarski. 1. The sky is the limit. Although Bednarski started later in life than the average farmer, he's created a successful business, made huge improvements on his farm and in his herd, and has become a leader in the agriculture community. 2. It's important for beef producers to unite to put a good face on beef production as a whole. Put in the effort to get your Masters of Beef Advocacy. Learn the right way to represent yourself and



your industry so you can do your part. 3. There are countless education programs out there, many of which are free. If you go to a free meeting and learn how to make more money, that's free money. In

the words of Jon Bednarski, "If I had to give advice to any farmer, young or old it would just be to take advantage of every opportunity available." 🐾

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