

Rudolph's dislike of hog chores led him to cattle industry

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Jeff Rudolph recently named president of Nebraska Cattlemen.

Jeff Rudolph has paid his dues in the cattle industry so to speak.

While growing up on a farm near Syracuse, he helped his parents raise dryland corn, soybeans and alfalfa and care for hogs and cattle.

Through 4-H and FFA, he honed his agricultural skills and knowledge and got a taste of the type of animal husbandry that fit him best.

“Growing up, I did hog chores and cattle chores and preferred doing cattle chores,” Rudolph said with a laugh.

Later, after graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with an animal science degree, Rudolph and his new bride, Brenda, struck out for western Kansas and later the Texas Panhandle.

For eight years, he was involved in a cattle-feeding operation.

In 1993, the Rudolphs returned to Nebraska and settled in Gothenburg where Jeff became general manager of Hi-Gain Feedlot Inc., a cattle-feeding operation with locations in Cozad and Farnam.

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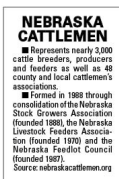
The 51-year-old became involved with the Dawson County Cattlemen association and, earlier this month, was named president of Nebraska Cattlemen.

"I feel compelled to give back to the industry," he said. "And the timing was right."

Giving back on the state level has already involved two years at the helm of the organization as vice president and

president-elect.

After a year as president, Rudolph will serve as past president.



As president of the Nebraska Cattlemen, he's the spokesperson for the organization and has responsibility for staff and finances as well as serving on the executive committee board of directors.

These days, Rudolph said cattlemen are concerned about continuing federal regulatory burdens.

"Whether it's water or dust monitoring or something else, increasing regulations have burdened agriculture," he said.

With little hope of the passage of a new farm bill yet this year, Rudolph said cattle producers have not been able to tap into disaster programs for relief from drought, blizzard or fires—all of which have affected producers in Nebraska and the Midwest.

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"Frontier County looks like the face of the moon," he said about the adjoining county still badly affected by drought. "And so far, it's been a dry winter."

Rudolph said the organization is also closely watching proposed legislation for the 2014 session that would affect the cattle industry.

For example, he said the Nebraska Cattlemen oppose sales tax on ag inputs which has been suggested as a way to lower property taxes.

"We advocate a broader sales tax base across the board," Rudolph said.

Another tax issue is the increasing tax burden on owners of agricultural land.

"Future taxing of ag inputs would only add to this burden," he said.

What people need to remember, Rudolph said, is that ag is Nebraska's leading employment sector.

"And beef is a big part of the ag sector," he noted. "Directly or indirectly, ag touches everyone in the population."

The importance of the beef industry to the state was reflected during the Cattlemen Anniversary Convention and Trade Show Dec. 4-6, Rudolph said.

"Nearly every candidate for state and federal office was there," he said.

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Through the years, Rudolph said the basics of the cattle industry have remained the same.

"Caring for and safely producing beef at the end of the day," he said.

Still, advances in technology and genetics in the past 20 years allows producers to raise heavier cattle with less land, water and grain.

"We're producing as many pounds of beef annually with three million fewer cows," Rudolph said.

He said technology is key to doubling the world's food output by 2050.

"And beef as a protein source will have a large role in feeding a global population," Rudolph said.

Rudolph is married to Brenda Rudolph, an executive assistant at All Points Cooperative.

The couple has three children: Jasen who recently graduated from law school, Brett who is first vice president at Pinnacle Bank in Ogallala and Jessie, a freshmen at Gothenburg High School.

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