

# Bullermans are Nobles County Farm Family of the Year

By [Julie Buntjer](#) on Jul 14, 2017 at 9:03 p.m.  
Published in “The Globe”



Trish and Tom Bullerman stand with one of their black Angus calves that will be shown by their granddaughter, Brynn, at the Nobles County Fair in a few weeks. (Julie Buntjer / The Globe)1 / 3

**ADRIAN** — Surrounded by fields of corn, soybeans and pasture land, the Tom and Trish Bullerman farm east of Adrian is home to friendly black Labradors, pigs that grunt and squeal and a black Angus cow-calf herd that can be seen dining on distant pasture land.

This is home for the Bullermans, who married in 1981 and settled on a quarter section in Little Rock Township two years later. Initially they ran a dairy — milking cows and raising crops — but when a dairy buyout program was offered in 1987, they took it.

Now, three decades after the milk cows left, the Bullerman farm has built a reputation in the beef industry, accelerating genetics in their registered black Angus cattle herd to market quality breeding stock. The Bullermans use both artificial insemination and embryo transfer in their 150-cow herd, with oldest son Tyler handling all of the genetics. A small portion of the herd is raised for competition in beef shows.

The Bullermans are Nobles County’s 2017 Farm Family of the Year, and will join 80 other Minnesota families garnering the distinction by their home counties during an Aug. 3 event at Farmfest in rural Redwood County. Locally, the Bullermans will be recognized at the Nobles County Fair Aug. 9, prior to the evening’s grandstand event.

Both farm kids — Trish grew up about five miles south and Tom grew up six miles north of their homestead (that site was designated as a century farm this year) — the Bullermans started raising hogs and cattle after their dairy herd was sold. They farrowed and sold feeder pigs until 1997, when the barn was destroyed by fire.

“We were at a wrestling meet and the neighbors came over and got everything out,” shared Tom, “We maybe only lost five or 10 of them.”

After the fire, the Bullermans constructed a new finishing barn and began custom feeding pigs.

“It used to be everybody farrowed; now there’s hardly anybody that does that anymore,” added Trish.

As for beef, they initially started with some commercial stock before purchasing two black Angus heifers from nearby farmer Vern Engelkes. They liked the disposition of the black Angus and thought the breed would be a good one for their sons, Tyler and Trent, to show in 4-H.

“We always kind of liked to show,” said Trish. “We had registered Holsteins when we were first married and did some showing with them. I guess we’re glutton for giving cows baths.”

“I was never in 4-H but I’ve probably washed more animals than a lot of 4-H’ers,” added Tom with a smile.

Their sons were in Nobles County 4-H for as long as they were eligible, and now the Bullermans have a granddaughter, Brynn, in her seventh year as a Nobles County 4-H’er.

In addition to showing beef at the Nobles County Fair and Minnesota State Fair, the family also travels to competitions at the Iowa State Fair, Angus Junior Nationals, Minnesota Beef Expo, and the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colo., while both competing and selling stock at the Sioux Empire (S.D.) Farm Show and Black Hills (S.D.) Stock Show.

With the two South Dakota shows in early January, by the time they return home, calving is in full swing. Most of the cows give birth between January and mid-March. To maintain a consistent herd size, they breed about 30 new heifers each year and sell about 25 to 30 cows from the herd.

Since 2003, artificial insemination has been used consistently with the herd. Tyler, with a degree in animal science and experience in embryo transfer, does all of the A.I. and embryo transfer work. Their annual goal is to produce 25 to 30 calves through the process of embryo transfer, which involves flushing fertilized eggs from their heifers and implanting them in recipient cows.

The practice allows the Bullermans to accelerate the best genetics in their cows and bulls.

“With the typical lifespan of a cow, they may have 10 to 12 calves,” Trish said. “(With embryo transfer and recipient cows), it’s totally realistic for them to have that many calves in one year. It comes with a price tag.”

For the past five years, the Bullermans have conducted a bull sale — with the last one, in February, hosted on their farm. A female sale will be added this November, and will be conducted on Tyler’s farm nearby. That sale will include bred cows, bred heifers and some heifer calves.

Four years ago, the Bullermans began collecting blood samples from the bulls in their herd to be performance scored and ranked by the American Angus Association. The breeder organization scores the samples for 18 different traits, including carcass quality such as good marbling and ribeye size.

“That helps us select our bulls or the ones that are going to be steers,” Tom said.

“On the female side, it helps us decide which ones to keep or which ones we’re going to use as recip cows,” added Trish.

The lower the points, the better the animal, and the better the animal, the better the price.

Last year the Bullermans sold two bulls to American Breeder Services, a company that markets semen. One was going to stay in the U.S. and the other was one of nearly a dozen to be sent to South America, but only three of those animals were ultimately sent.

As a result of that sale, however, the Bullermans hosted a group of visitors from South America last summer. The mix of cattle breeders and American Breeder Services representatives spent 10 days touring cattle operations in Minnesota and South Dakota.

The Bullermans plan to continue improving the genetics in their cattle herd, and their sons, each of whom own some stock, will likely carry on the cattle breeding operation someday.

Tyler has his own farm and is planning to get more involved in swine production, while Trent works as a registered nurse and health coach for Sanford Luverne, and helps out at the farm whenever he can. His wife, Christine, is the Community Wellness Partners coordinator at Nobles County Community Services. Tom and Trish also had a daughter, Tara, who died of leukemia at age 9. In addition to granddaughter Brynn, they have a 3-year-old granddaughter, Kendall.

Also honored as Farm Family of the Year this year are Will Farms of Cottonwood County, the Pohlman farm of Jackson County, Suprenant Farms of Murray County, the Lisa Henderson-Smith family of Pipestone County and the Dave and Stacy Mente family of Rock County.