



#FridaysOnTheFarm: Trailer Made for Farmers Markets

Each Friday, visit local farms, ranches, forests, and resource areas through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Meet farmers, producers, and landowners who are working to improve their operations with USDA programs.

This Friday meet Phil and Dawn Keppler of SK Herefords in Medina, New York. They raise registered and commercial Hereford beef cattle on the farm, as well as corn and hay. Located about halfway between Rochester and Buffalo, their location provides a great opportunity to direct market their beef at farmers markets.

Cover Crops

The Kepplers own SK Herfords with their daughter, Alana Welker, her husband, Zack, and their business partner, Dave Schubel.

SK Herefords produces feed for their cattle on their farm, growing about 300 acres of corn and nearly 500 acres of hay and pasture. The corn is harvested for grain or chopped for silage for the cows to eat during the winter.

As big believers in planting cover crops and following no till practices, they cover their corn fields in rye after harvesting. In the spring, this rye provides a pleasant place for the cows to calve. The Kepplers found calving on the rye has reduced their incidence of mastitis, an infection of the udder, to nearly zero.

“We’ve been planting cover crops for years. It really helps cut down on erosion and improve the health of our soil,” Phil said. “We love cover crops and plant them as much as possible.”

Consumer Connection

Dawn serves as an advisor on her local USDA [Farm Service Agency](#) county committee. During one of the meetings, she heard about the [Farm Storage Facility Loan program](#). This program provides low-interest funding to buy or upgrade storage facilities and vehicles.

“I kept hearing about these loans for grain bins and wondered if we could use one to store our beef, and we could,” said Dawn.

At the time, the Kepplers had been selling their beef out of large ice chests on the back of their truck.

With the Farm Storage Facility Loan, they purchased an enclosed trailer, complete with air conditioning, sanitation and handling equipment, access doors, and two large chest freezers.



The freezers are powered with a small portable generator at the farmers markets and by a converter in the truck while in transport.

The first time they went to the market with the new trailer they completely sold out of their products.

With their customer base growing and successful sales, SK Herefords purchased a second trailer with another Farm Storage Facility Loan so they could add another market to their schedule and increase the amount of beef they direct market.

“Selling our beef at farmers markets is crucial for us. We couldn’t stay in business without our market sales,” Phil said. “We enjoy talking to the public and answering their questions. There is so much mis-information out there, its important farmers tell our story, and help people understand why we do what we do. When you explain it to them, they understand and they’re getting the facts, straight from the farmer. Our consumers want that connection.”

Growing the Business

The trailers provide them the ability to make new revenue stream opportunities and have a polished presence. As SK Herefords business continues to grow, they find new ways to sell their beef.

They partnered with a neighboring orchard where their beef is sold in the orchard’s store. In return, they sell the orchard’s apple cider at farmers markets.

During the winter months, they also set up their trailer at a bakery in Buffalo to continue providing for their customers during the winter months while the farmers market isn’t open.

“People want to know about their food and where it’s from, and we need to make sure they’re learning that from farmers,” Phil said. “Being present at the markets, talking to our consumers directly, has worked well for us.”

More Information

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster assistance, loan, and conservation programs to help agricultural producers in the United States weather ups and downs in the market and recover from natural disasters as well as invest in improvements to their operations. [Learn about additional programs.](#)

For more information about USDA programs and services, [contact your local USDA service center.](#)

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