

Shane Tiffany – 1

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“From bombs to bovines.” That sounds like an unusual transition, and it is. It describes a transformation of a former Army air base in central Kansas which became a cattle feedlot and is now part of one of the state’s leading cattle operations. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Shane and Shawn Tiffany and their wives are the owners and operators of Tiffany Cattle Company, whose feedyard is built on a former Army air base near Herington. Coincidentally, Shane and Shawn grew up on this place because their dad managed the feedyard from 1988 to 2002. Their father then moved to take over their grandfather’s silage harvesting operation.

Shane and Shawn went to K-State where they participated in the livestock judging team. Then they started into corporate careers. Shane worked at the Kansas City Board of Trade and then went to Texas as a cattle buyer.

In 2007, the owner of the feedyard on the Army air base back in Kansas contacted them. He was ready for an ownership transition and wanted to see if they were interested in buying. “After much prayer and discussion, we took the jump,” Shane said.

The Tiffany Cattle Company now consists of a 15,500 head capacity feedlot and an extensive farming operation. The feedlot is located on what had been the Herington Army air base during World War II. During the war, B-29 bombers had been built in Wichita and then flown to Herington so that pilots could be trained in them. The airfield closed in 1945 and eventually went into private hands. In the early 1960s, a feedyard was constructed on the abandoned airfield.

“We sit on 42 acres of concrete,” Shane said. “Our feed alleys are the old runways. Our feed bunks and waterers are on concrete too.” This creates the advantage of having less mud and more cattle comfort.

The feedyard is located in a rural area five miles east of Herington and south of the rural community of Latimer, population 21 people. Now, that’s rural.

The Tiffany brothers have expanded and enhanced the operation since taking over. “It’s a great team,” Shane said. “We each have our responsibility.” The brothers don’t have official titles, but Shane essentially serves as business and marketing manager while Shawn manages operations, including maintenance, animal nutrition, and the large farming operation.

“God has blessed us so much,” Shane said. When the Tiffany brothers took over, the yard was feeding about 3,000 head of cattle from eight to ten customers. Today, the Tiffanys work with 130 to 140 customers and are feeding twelve thousand cattle. Wow. Feeder cattle come here from Virginia to Montana and from Texas to the Dakotas.

Tiffany Cattle Company is a member of U.S. Premium Beef, the marketing company which we have previously profiled.

The science of feeding cattle is remarkable today, including scientific rations and individual tracking of each animal. Pen riders check the cattle health daily.

But as much as Shane Tiffany loves the cattle business, other factors such as faith and family rank even higher. “We’re a Christian business,” Shane said. “We wear our

faith on our sleeve. We believe in honesty and hard work, and we've tried to establish that culture here. We also get to recruit phenomenal employees."

A plaque above Shane's desk says: "Man before business, because man is your business." The Tiffanys start their workday very early so they and their employees can make time for family and after-school activities.

Now the former Herington air base has become a site for cattle feeding and family values. It is quite a transition.

From bombs to bovines. From missiles to moos. From take-offs to T-bones. That's the remarkable transformation which this air base has undergone as it has become a beef cattle feedyard. We commend Shane and Shawn Tiffany, their families, and all those involved with Tiffany Cattle Company for making a difference with their commitment to faith, family and the cattle business. Their location has made a remarkable changeover: From airplanes to agriculture.

And there's more. Shane Tiffany is has also founded a new local grocery store. We'll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.