



Agriculture Council Formed to Unite Oklahoma Farmers

Local farmers join with The Humane Society of the United States to foster better animal welfare and environmental stewardship

GAITHERSBURG, MD, UNITED STATES, October 7, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, The Humane Society of the United States announces The [Oklahoma Agriculture Council](#). The council is the eighth in the organization's emerging system of [state agriculture councils](#).

Meet the local farmers who make up The HSUS Agriculture Council for Oklahoma:

Harlan Hentges

Harlan Hentges has practiced law for more than 20 years, focusing on issues that affect farmers and ranchers, such as air and water pollution, eminent domain, agricultural contracts, regulatory compliance and estate and business planning. He brings to his practice an education that spans agricultural economics (at Oklahoma State University), law and public affairs (at the University of Texas).

Harlan's family has farmed and ranched in Oklahoma since 1896, spanning the history of U.S. agricultural policy.

The guiding principle of Harlan's practice is that serving independent farmers and ranchers is both economically valuable and socially responsible because these farmers and ranchers are essential to a reliable food supply and a healthy economy. His strategy is to both help independent farmers and ranchers comprehend the value of their skills as well as their ability to produce food and to defend them from business and governmental actions that deplete their economic and natural resources.

Addressing matters of animal welfare, Harlan believes, requires an examination of the business strategies and governmental policies that adversely affect farmers and ranchers. As the death of a canary in a coal mine reveals danger to a miner, the emergence of animal welfare concerns signals a threat to independent farmers and ranchers.

Paul Muegge

Sen. Paul Muegge farms with one of his sons and supports environmental causes, with a particular interest in monitoring the growth of industrial agriculture. His 12 years of service in the Oklahoma State Senate ended in 2002. During his final eight years in office, Sen. Muegge chaired the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and participated in two national task forces.

In 1998, Sen. Muegge received the "Public Official of the Year" award from "Governing Magazine" in recognition of the ground-breaking hog and poultry legislation he pushed through the state senate. That legislation established regulations that addressed factory farming issues that corporate agriculture had brought to Oklahoma. As a result, he was given the opportunity to serve on a task force at the Harrison Institute for Democracy and Trade at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Sen. Muegge also served on the National Conference of State Legislatures' Rural Development Task force for two years. And at the close of his days in the senate, it was his great honor to participate in a legislative exchange at a 2002 legislative conference in Munich, Germany.

In 2004 Sen. Muegge was honored with a John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for "courage in standing up to the powerful hog industry ... in order to protect the environment and the health and well-being of [his] constituents." Today, Sen. Muegge has retired from consulting and resides in Tonkawa, Oklahoma, with his wife, Nancy.

Lauren Nitschke

Lauren and her husband, Gary, run the Circle N, a sustainably managed cow-calf grass-fed cattle operation on the Texhoma, Oklahoma, ranch Gary's parents began building in the 1950s. Both Lauren and Gary trained as architects at Texas A&M. It wasn't until the passing of Gary's father in 2003 that they heeded the call of the ranch and left their Dallas design careers.

To design a comprehensive ranching protocol for the Circle N, Gary and Lauren combined the family's longtime tradition of responsible land stewardship with their own convictions regarding health, nutrition, the environment and animal welfare.

Since cattle thrive under low-stress conditions, Lauren, Gary and ranch manager Chris James strive to make life at the Circle N as stress-free as possible. They treat their cows very gently and respectfully, using no prods, ropes or confinement. Timing calving seasons to coincide with ample forage supply, Lauren and Gary work to insure the best nutrition possible for the moms and babies.

Every calf is bred, born and raised on the ranch, so they are spared the stresses associated with excessive handling, transportation and co-mingling with non-herd members. Instead, Circle N cattle coexist naturally with their herd-mates and are surrounded by abundant wildlife, including the rich microbial life below the soil that is so important to quality forage.

The Circle N is an American Grassfed Association certified cattle operation. It markets its calves to the southwest region of Whole Foods Market through its association with the Grassfed Livestock Alliance. The Circle N's online-only private label, "Nitschke Natural Beef All Pasture—All the Time," has a loyal following in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Lauren is enjoying building new relationships with fellow Texhomans now that the couple resides full-time on the ranch. The Nitschkes have two grown children and a grandson who loves to spend time with his Papa and Lolo on the ranch.

Adam Price

Adam Price is the operations manager for the Oklahoma Food Cooperative, a marketplace where sustainable farmers and producers can sell and distribute their products statewide.

Adam also serves on the Board of Directors of the OFC and has been actively involved in the organization since 2008. Although he's not a farmer, much of Adam's work involves growing and maintaining a distribution network that benefits sustainable farmers throughout Oklahoma. Ultimately, Adam believes that we need many more people to take up the practice of sustainable farming, and he would like to help create a system that will encourage more Oklahomans to begin farming as an occupation.

Adam is also involved in various other sustainability and urban agriculture initiatives in the Oklahoma City metro area, which is his home. He would like to see sustainable, humane agricultural practices grow in both the rural and urban environments.

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