

SAME FAMILY, DIFFERENT PATHS IN AGRICULTURE

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For two sisters from an Ontario beef feedlot and cash crop operation, **Sally Smith Pelleboer** and **Jocelyn Smith**, agriculture has always been their passion but they have chosen very different ways to begin a career and lifestyle in agriculture.

They were taught that the career possibilities in agriculture are endless, which allows people from different backgrounds, employment experience and education to join the ever changing industry.

SALLY'S STORY

Sally Smith Pelleboer has loved agriculture for as long as she can remember. "I have to be in agriculture, it's in my blood and that will never change," says Smith Pelleboer.

Pursuing a career in agriculture was obvious to her, and her original goal was to graduate from high school and begin working on the family beef feedlot and cash crop operation full time. However, her father believed she needed experience off the farm as well as a post-secondary education to give her future opportunities in agriculture. As a graduate of the Ridgetown Campus, her father encouraged her to follow in his footsteps.

Smith Pelleboer chose to go into the two-year agriculture diploma program at Ridgetown Campus, **University of Guelph** in 2000. With the knowledge she already had entering into Ridgetown College, the diploma program opened her eyes to other areas of agriculture and gave her theoretical knowledge.

While attending Ridgetown Campus, she acquired skills in agronomy, communications and sales. Smith Pelleboer regularly uses these skills when giving recommendations to her clients as a Sales Representative for **Pioneer Hi-Bred**.

Her college experience allowed her to learn a lot of valuable skills,



Jocelyn Smith (l) and Sally Smith Pelleboer may have been raised in the same home and share the same passion for agriculture, but they took very different career paths in an industry with so many career options to choose from.

but she does wish she had continued her education and received a four-year degree to increase her knowledge of the industry and open up career options.

Smith Pelleboer would advise a first year student going into agriculture to "have fun, but take it seriously because it is important and you do fall back on it later in life." In the end, she realizes why her father encouraged her to get an education and she's happy to have had the opportunity to do so.

Smith Pelleboer's goal when leaving the Ridgetown Campus was to work with her father on the family beef feedlot and cash crop operation. She worked on the family farm for a year before starting to work for **Naglehaven Farms**, a large dairy farm in Oxford County in 2002.

This experience away from the family farm expanded her knowledge of different aspects of the agricultural industry and allowed her to make new and valuable connections, which are essential to creating a successful career within the agricultural industry.

She says her biggest accomplishment so far is landing her position with Pioneer Hi-Bred in 2007. She says, "working with the farmers is exciting and my goal is to be a partner with the farmers, not an irritating sales person."

Smith Pelleboer has a Pioneer agency in which she sells corn, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa seed as well as silage inoculants.

Pioneer is the world's leader in plant genetics, based out of Chatham, ON.

In the fall, Smith Pelleboer is responsible for weighing plots with her weigh wagon and doing side by side comparisons of field crops. She also spends a lot of time with her customers, riding in combines and discussing yield and quality. After harvest is complete, she begins selling seed for the next season. She finishes 90% of her sales for next spring by the end of December.

In the winter, Smith Pelleboer attends meetings and agronomy training provided by Pioneer. In January and February, seed and products arrive at her warehouse.

She is responsible for getting all the seed needs met for her clients, beginning in March with corn seed delivery.

After the busy planting season, it's all about servicing her clients and she is accountable if there are any issues or concerns with the crop. She frequently walks fields with her clients to monitor their crops and evaluates new hybrids in trial plots during the growing season.

Smith Pelleboer has also found time in her busy schedule to volunteer with the **South West Beef Breeders Co-op**. She has been on the board of directors and has been the President for two years.

The South West Beef Breeders Co-op provides financing to farmers for open heifers, bred heifers and bred cows. The board of directors is responsible for running the co-op, approving memberships, and purchase applications.

When thinking about this opportunity, she says, "It has given me a lot of experience with the cattle business and running meetings." Smith Pelleboer has also been involved in the **Oxford County Cattlemen's Association** since 2005, where she is currently President.

At the end of a busy day, Smith Pelleboer feels personal satisfaction that she is able to give back to the agricultural community.

Today, she is a 28-year-old mother, wife, Pioneer Hi-Bred Independent Sales Representative, and owns her own 28 beef cow herd.

Smith Pelleboer's days are unpredictable and exciting. Her jobs and lifestyle give her the flexibility to take care of her family and be her own boss.

JOCELYN'S STORY

Growing up on a beef feedlot and cash crop operation allowed Jocelyn Smith to see the importance of food production at a very young age. Spending time with her dad in the field and working with livestock fueled her strong interest in biological sciences.

Her childhood experiences influenced her decision to enter into the **University of Guelph's** bachelor of science in agriculture program.

In her second year, she changed programs into a bachelor of science to get a broader look at science as a whole and to keep her career options open.

The knowledge Smith obtained at the University of Guelph gave her the groundwork and confidence for a career in the agricultural industry but she feels it is a lifelong process.

"The program gives you a good educational foundation," says Smith. She specialized in agricultural entomology and pest management. She also obtained skills in statistics, chemistry, and writing that she now uses within her current career as a Research Associate at the University of Guelph's Ridgetown Campus.

While attending the university, Smith had various summer jobs within the agricultural industry. Her positions included working as a research assistant for the **Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs** at Ridgetown Campus, University of Guelph and in insect toxicology at **Agriculture and Agri-Food**, London, ON.

These summer job opportunities allowed her to make valuable connections within the industry. Looking back on her undergraduate experience, Smith would encourage students to get to know their professors and teaching assistants to build relationships within the industry. She also encourages students who know what they are interested in, to pursue summer work in that area and gain hands-on experience.

During her summer work at the University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus, Smith met **Dr. Art Schaafsma**, Field Crops Entomologist and current Director of the Ridgetown Campus.

Dr. Schaafsma provided her the opportunity to complete a M.Sc. project in Crop Science.

Smith continues to work with Dr. Schaafsma at the Ridgetown Campus as a research associate in field crop pest management research. She feels that the relationships she has developed with former employees and colleagues have played a very important part in her career development.

She is now 32-years-old and has been in the industry for six years. She currently manages a field crop entomology research program with the help of summer students and research assistants.

Smith completes the process of planting and maintaining field trials, collecting data and communicating results to colleagues, funding agencies and producers. She finds research to be a very rewarding career because the end results are useful pest management strategies for producers, and the diverse nature of her many research projects allow her to work both in the field and the office.

Smith's projects are designed to understand pest biology and the results of interactions with environmental or production practices. She also evaluates the efficacy of various management practices, and monitors resistance development with transgenic crops.

The end goal of Smith's research is always to develop economical and sustainable production information and recommendations for growers.

Through her position with the University of Guelph, Smith continues to expand her knowledge by attending research conferences and by collaborating with researchers and industry partners in Canada and the U.S. Smith also plans to begin her Ph.D. in 2011 on the phenology and management of Western bean cutworm, a new, emerging pest in corn and dry beans in Ontario.

Although Smith Pelleboer and Smith have chosen different career paths, it is evident that their enthusiasm for the agricultural industry has been the driving force behind their career choices.

Through education, connections and personal development, these two women have chosen careers that allow them to build a stronger agricultural community and use their skills in a field that really matters.

Smith Pelleboer and Smith are perfect examples of the wide range of career options in agriculture and how agriculture can be a rewarding career choice.