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A blog about cultivating stories from the ground up

SEP. 25, 2012

My Farm Roots: Entrusted with a legacy

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By: Camille Phillips



Nathan Dorn stands in front of the feedlot on his family's farm in Adams, Neb. (Camille Phillips/Harvest Public Media)

This is the twelfth installment of My Farm Roots, Harvest Public Media's series chronicling Americans' connection to the land. [Click here to explore more My Farm Roots stories and to share your own.](#)

hour south of Lincoln, Neb., lies the Dorn family farm. That's where Nathan Dorn grew up, where his grandfather farmed before him and where his father, uncles and cousin now farm beside him.

Down a stretch of rural highway and country roads lined with fields, about an

Dorn's strong ties to the land made the decision to continue the family tradition of farming an easy one. But it also leaves him feeling misunderstood by the average American.

"A lot of people don't understand what we do," Dorn said, standing next to one of the farm's feedlots. "One in five people in Nebraska farm, but only one in fifty in the nation does."

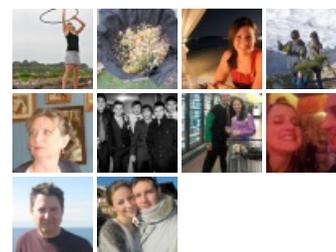
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I met Nathan Dorn on my way back from a reporting trip for a story on [genetically modified food and whether or not it could be a cause in the rise of food allergies among children](#). So consumer impressions of food safety was on our minds as Dorn and I sat on the back of his truck to talk, the munching and snuffling of cattle in the background .

Dorn is concerned that lack of understanding by the majority of Americans could force him to change the way he farms, maybe by making him stop using genetically modified seeds to increase his yields or giving his cattle hormone suppressants so they are docile in the feedlot.

“I hope as a farmer people trust my judgment where I can make that call,” Dorn said. “It’s very important to me that I do things the right way... I don’t want to do something that would damage the trust that people have placed in me.”

And Dorn also has personal reasons for wanting to take good care of the land and the farm. If he doesn’t, the farm won’t be profitable and productive in years to come.

Dorn says his grandfather “did a good job to take care of the land so that I could farm, who am I to say that I shouldn’t take care of the land so that in sixty years my grandson will be sitting here with a reporter doing the exact same thing?”

He wants to give the same gift to his family that his grandfather gave to him.

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