

November 1, 2016

Hello Boys and Girls,

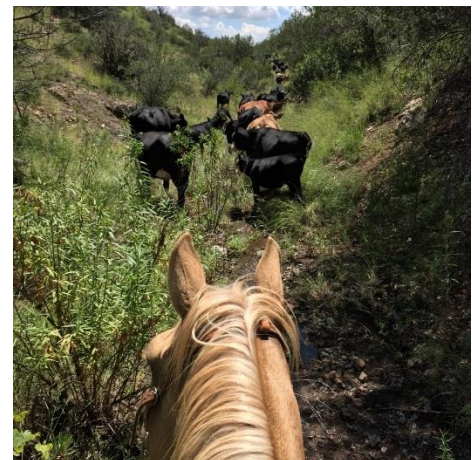
My name is Mackenzie Kimbro and I am a cattle rancher in Arizona. My family has been raising cattle for 6 generations. This means that my family has been carrying for cattle for over 120 years! We are proud to be part of the pasture-to-plate journey that cattle take to become delicious beef and we are thankful to be able to help feed America!



We are always working hard to produce the highest quality product that we can, and my family is not alone. More than 97% of beef cattle farms and ranches are family farms. In fact, there are more than 1 million beef producers in the United States that are responsible for more than 94 million head of cattle. Just in Arizona, ranchers care for over 870,000 head of cattle! That's a lot, isn't it?!

With all those cattle to take care of, ranchers are always busy! But, we are just one step along the way for cattle to go from grazing in a pasture to delicious beef on your plate. The journey it takes for cattle to get from pasture to plate is unique and requires a lot of people to make it happen. From start to finish, cattle take two to three years to get all the way through the process. It all starts on the farm or ranch where we have momma cows and bulls.

On cow/calf operations (ranches), which is what my family has, cows are bred by bulls and there are calves (babies) born every year. The calves will spend the first few months drinking their momma's milk. The calves each get a brand (a permanent mark) so we know what ranch they belong to. They also get vaccinations, usually in the form of shots, so that they don't get sick. Some calves may get an ear tag or ear mark notched out for further identification, and the bull calves (boys) are castrated so they can be even tastier when they grow up and are harvested for beef. Even though our calves receive vaccinations,



sometimes the cattle might still get sick. When this happens ranchers work with a veterinarian to nurse the sick animal back to health, usually by giving them antibiotics or other veterinary treatments. All of the cattle that live on the ranch are taken really good care of and are supplemented with blocks or tubs full of minerals they need to stay healthy and feeling good.



In order to really take care of our cattle and continue ranching year after year, we have to also take good care of the land our cattle live on and the forage (grasses) that our cattle eat. Ranchers work with several agencies and organizations to make sure we properly manage the feed and land so that we can preserve it and keep it in production for years to come. Something that I have always loved about ranching and being stewards of the land is that we also work to keep the land healthy for wildlife populations, which coexist with our cattle herds, water at our livestock tanks, and occasionally come up in the middle of the herd while we're gathering. It's pretty neat to see deer, antelope, and other creatures living right alongside our cattle and loving every minute of it.

After about six to twelve months on the ranch, calves weigh about 400 to 600 pounds, are weaned off of their mothers and travel in trailers to a livestock auction yard. Usually cattle arrive one or two days before the sale happens. At the feed yard they are still very well taken care of, are fed a maintenance diet and looked over by a veterinarian to make sure they are healthy and ready to head to the next stage in the process. Once the cattle are sold at the livestock auction market, they are hauled to either a stocker operation where they will grow a bit more (this is usually where the lighter weight calves live until they're about 700 pounds) or will head directly into a feedlot.

When cattle first arrive at the feedlot, they are given a few more shots as boosters to the first vaccinations they got when they were younger, and are usually given a special identifying ear tag. In the feedlot, cattle are fed a carefully balanced, grain-based diet that is made up of things like corn, oats and cottonseed hulls, providing protein and fat in their diets, along with a few other things that give the cattle a boost of more protein, vitamins and minerals. Hay is also blended in as roughage, which scratches the inside of cattle's stomachs and helps keep their digestion going smoothly. Here's a fun fact for you... Cattle are "ruminants," which means they have one big stomach, divided into 4 chambers! Those four parts of the stomach are all important to the digestion of feed cattle eat. Often, part of the feed ration also includes fruits and vegetables that were left over from local grocery stores, so not much really ever goes to waste! Cattle are fed good quality feedstuffs and that in turn helps them grow and eventually become high quality beef that tastes good and is good for you. Pretty neat, right?

While cattle are living in a feedlot, they are under the care of a veterinarian and team of skilled people who make the safety and comfort of the cattle their number one priority. Cattle live in big pens with lots of room to move around and have constant access to clean water. As natural-instinct herd animals, they tend to lay together and are creatures of habit. Cowboys called “pen riders” ride on horse s through each pen of cattle every day to make sure they are comfortable. The pen riders can also take them to the veterinary care pen if the cattle aren’t feeling well. The cattle are fed two to three times daily, starting early in the morning with breakfast, just like we do! The cattle eat about 25 pounds of feed at each meal. That’s a lot of feed!

Once the cattle have reached an appropriate weight (about 1,300 pounds) and are finished growing good muscles, they are harvested at a packing house. This process is very humane and is held to a very high standard of safety for the animals coming in and the people processing them from that point on. The beef is packaged up and shipped either to restaurants or grocery stores, where your family gets it!

Another really cool thing about this final step in the process is that not much of the animal is wasted. Not only do we get a bunch of beef from each animal when they are harvested, but we also use their hide for leather, as well as their collagen, bones, blood, hooves and other parts all called “byproducts.” We can make a lot of things out of byproducts including toothpaste, crayons, some medicines, marshmallows, soap, and even tires!

Beef is a great source of protein that also tastes delicious and provides us with essential nutrients! There are lots of different cuts of beef to choose from, including steaks, roasts that your family might have when everyone gets together, ground beef for hamburgers or tacos or things like that, ribs and more!



There are a lot of people involved in the beef lifecycle, from ranchers to veterinarians and nutritionists and then to those involved in packaging and processing the beef and byproducts. Every single one of these people is committed to raising beef to feed America in a responsible manner and working together to do so. We as members of the beef community take great pride in raising cattle to provide America with safe, wholesome, nutritious and delicious beef. We all know how important it is to take really good care of our cattle, and we work hard to do so. Our main goal beyond animal welfare is producing a good quality beef that we are proud to feed our families and yours.

Thank you all for letting me share the story of how cattle go from pasture to plate. I love being a rancher, and I really love getting to talk to people about the beef community and how cattle are raised. I am so excited to hear what questions you will have for me!

Until then, I’m hoping you’ll be having a yummy snack of beef jerky or some tasty beef for lunch or dinner, and that you’ll think about how many people and how much work it took to get that beef from our ranches to your plate. Thanks again everyone!

Sincerely,

Mackenzie Kimbro

6th Generation Beef Cattle Rancher

Douglas, Arizona

