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Interview with Bruce Conard

Tim Greenwood

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Researchers Name: Tim Greenwood

Event: Interview with Bruce Conard

Place: Conard Farm in Martinsburg, Ohio

Co-workers Present: none

This is Timothy Greenwood, interviewing Bruce Conard in Martinsburg, Ohio. It is February 19, 2007. We are going to be talking about the local food production, beef and the future of the local food systems.

TG: so how long have you been farming?

BC: all my life. I worked some other jobs but I have always farmed. But what do you want to know. I will try to answer anything I can.

TG: How many head of cattle do you have?

BC: right now, about 148 on feed. Then we got two groups of brood cows that raise calves that go to the lot.

FC: this pin right here is all females. We don't have a scale but we would estimate that they are we are guessing about 400-450 pounds but they can get up to 600. Now they are not going to get so much corn or grain at this age because we are trying to grow 'em

BC: the heifers always to get fat quicker than the steers do

FC: and so they will have more of a roughage diet, the eat halite, or corn silage. That what we give to them. We feed them in the bunks twice a day morning and night. We know when they are coming to eat and we ration what the feed. These bags here are corn silage. Which is the stalk of corn, you chop it up real fine. It has the stalk and the grain.

BC: the Heifers they get a whole bunch of Haliage. which is a bag on out there I can show you a handful. The pin here is both steers and heifers so they get a whole bunch feed because different cattle gets different feed.

FC: the foods have a different smell to them.

BC: we have some cows that are going to calve in the fall, then we got some down near Bladensburg that will start in a week or two. So we spring calve and fall calve.

FC: we have some that go on more of a corn diet and this is the ground corn that they are fed.

FC: this is what they are talking about. This gets them their protein. These here get to eat as much as they want because they are getting their weight before they are finished. This is what the final stage is on weight.

BC: do you eat much beef when you are there?

TG: yeah

BC: well, then you are probably eating it. We have tried to keep Kenyon pretty well stocked.

TG: Roughly what are the weights on these?

BC: oh about 1300. the normal finished weight on these cattle is anywhere from 1150 to 1500. we had some Holsteins that are bigger than that and we have some Angus that are bigger than that. I call anything that ain't a Holstein a colored calf. We normally put all the steers in one lot and all the Heifers in another. But there are times we mix them together

TG: how big are the feed bags?

BC: those are eight foot in diameter, and those are probably 135 there. Those will hold a ton and a half of silage per foot. So there is a lot of feed in them. Which we fill like four bags of hay every year and three bags of corn silage.

TG: do you farm anything else besides the cattle?

BC: No, we cleared out the hogs. Its cattle and we do a lot of square bails of alfalfa, we sell some soy beans and some corn and wheat

TG: is there a big difference from the hogs?

BC: the thing with the hogs is that you have to do so many numbers to make any money, if you don't have 1000 or 2000 heads, you can't hardly compete

FC: most of the farmers now are getting contracts with the large corporations before they buy their hogs so they now what their profit is going to be.

BC: most of the hogs fed around here the farmer don't even own. He has a barn that costs about 500 thousand dollars and guy fills its full of pigs most of them even bring the feed and all that guy does is watch them and haul the manure and feed them. There is a very small profit margin on the hogs.

FC: the reason that we like this pin is because there is a stream that runs through and there is no electric to it and it doesn't freeze up. And right on the other side of them is a water trough and they can drink from that and get a lot of spring water and natural minerals that stem from the catch basin.

BC: it froze one time back in like 76 or 77. there was like a week or so when it was constantly below zero.

TG: so how long have you been farming?

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