

Natalie Locke Milne

Robert Lundquist, president, Diamond 7 Meats Inc.

Robert Lundquist, president of Diamond 7 Meats, has a gift. “I can identify tender meat in live cattle and know that the meat is going to be tender to eat,” says Lundquist. This “gift” has given his Saskatchewan-based Diamond 7 Meats the competitive edge, taking it from a family run ranch selling its meat at farmers’ markets, to a full-service processing facility that is about to expand for the third time in less than 20 years. Diamond 7, named in honour of Robert and his wife H  l  ne’s seven children, began marketing high-quality, tender meat from their ranch in the early 1990s. By 1998 it was clear to Robert and H  l  ne that in order to keep up with demand they would have to purchase their own processing facility. The couple approached their son Aron, a trained meat cutter, to go into partnership, and the next year Diamond 7 moved into a plant processing 200 to 300 animals a year, with eight full-time employees. In 2003 the company relocated to its current Lloydminster, Sask. facility, and is now processing 2,500 animals a year. Just four years later, the Lundquist’s, along with shareholder and master sausage-maker Keith Rhinehart, are again expanding. “We’re in the planning and development stages for a new federally inspected facility which would allow us to export across Canada and into the U.S.,” says Lundquist.

Robert Lundquist



Q&A

What do you love most about your job and why?

“I enjoy dealing with people. I thrive on listening and working with interesting people.”

What is your management philosophy?

“It all goes back to our company mission statement: The products we produce will never be anything but the finest pure and natural meat products available. Customer satisfaction is a priority above all. And we treat our employees the same way that we treat our customers, like family.”

What is the most challenging part of your job?

“I think the most challenging thing that we have to deal with is regulations. The bureaucracy that we have to get through before we can get on with doing business is extremely difficult.”

How would you describe your operational or management style?

“We do a lot of strategy planning. We are also very involved in holistic management, a movement that helps people understand how they live, manage their businesses, and tend to their land and their livestock while thinking about their environment and people. It’s certainly been a major impact on the way we manage our business.”

Where do you see the meat sector going?

“I believe that consumers of the world are going to become much more conscious of what they are eating, where their food is coming from, how its produced and what contaminants may be in it. People have eaten all-natural, organic meat up until the last one-and-a-half generations, and now people are going to go back to making sure that they’re eating food that’s been grown and managed in the proper way.”

What are the issues your sector is facing?

“Disposing of waste. It has become such an enormous problem for everybody. And basically there has been no action taken by any of the regulatory bodies to help the meat sector cope with it. None of the waste reduction processing facilities wants to deal with specific risk material (SRM). And the ones that do deal with SRM are increasing their costs. I think you’ll find that a lot of meat plants are going to have to create their own waste disposal systems. That’s one of the things we are planning for our new facility.”

INTHE SPOTLIGHT

FIRST INDUSTRY JOB: “Selling the meat from our ranch at farmers’ markets.”

FAVOURITE FOOD: “A wonderful, tender rib-eye steak.”

INDUSTRY MENTOR: “Dr. Gerald Frye, a U.S. meat scientist. He’s someone who has impacted the way I think and do business.”