



Steven & Amy Muller

- Steven, 35-years-old; Amy 33-years-old
- Agar, S.D.
- Owners/Operators of Midwest Sonatech and Muller Cattle; fifth generation partners in Sutton Rodeo, Inc.

Education: Graduates of South Dakota State University, 2005 and 2007, respectively, both with animal science degrees

Family: Two children: Shaden, 5 and Shally, 14 months

Steven: Judged livestock at Northeast Community College at Norfolk before attending SDSU. Co-owns Midwest Sonatech with wife, Amy. Assists with day-to-day operations and rodeo production for Sutton Rodeo, Inc.

Amy: Three-time National Finals Rodeo PRCA timer, office manager, marketing, social media and merchandising for Sutton Rodeo, Inc.

Business Philosophy: "If you are persistent, you will get it. If you are consistent, you will keep it." ~Harvey Mackay

Rule to Follow: Risk is greater than regret.

A Hair-Raising Experience: Amy recalls, "It was late and freezing at our second job for the day. We were in very tight quarters with only one helper. A bull came out of the chute mad, spun around and charged Steven. The bull took Steven down with the chute bar. Then, he got his own legs wrapped in our heater cord. I jumped on the table to hold down our equipment and realized that was our nightmare! Steven and the bull were on the ground. Our equipment took a beating, and the only way for the bull to get out was to go right back through our electronics. By some miracle, everything—including Steven—was in one piece, and we were able to finish the rest of the herd peacefully!"

Never Say NEVER

By Amy Blum

Some folks think being part of a multi-generation business is easy. The foundation is built. Relationships are established. Reputations are earned.

Those on the inside can tell you differently.

Your shoulders bear the responsibility to continue traditions and grow into the future. Your heart is pulled to balance family priorities with personal aspirations. Your mind must be respectful of the past, prepared to handle the present and ever cognizant of the future. The continued longevity and relevance of the business you've joined falls to you.

On top of it all, you must maintain a personal identity and purpose while adding value to the big picture.

Welcome to Steven and Amy Muller's life!

The couple does big work as part of the famed Sutton Rodeo family's fifth generation; however, these movers and shakers aren't resting on the laurels of anyone's last name.

"Something that really pushed us initially was a conversation with my dad [Steve Sutton] before we joined the partnership with him, my grandfather, Jim, and my brothers, Brent and Brice," Amy says. "Everyone was supportive of us joining, but Dad advocated for us to diversify into something that would work well with the seasonal rodeo schedule. Looking back, I don't know if we would have taken the leap into our own business ventures without that push from Dad."

Her dad's encouragement for the couple to find their own path led them to a conversation with Cindy Nagel of Springfield, S.D. Nagel owned and operated Midwest Sonatech, a cattle ultrasounding business for which Steven worked as a senior in college.

The pair began working with Nagel and learned the art of carcass ultrasound. By 2007, the couple bought Nagel's business.

"Cindy built a tremendous reputation and founded a strong business," Steven says.

Amy adds, "We were so fortunate Cindy entrusted her company to us. She was an incredible teacher for Steven with the scanning fundamentals, and she passed down a wealth of knowledge regarding how to operate a professional business from the road."

As business owners, the couple worked to build relationships with past and new clients. Twelve years later, Amy says they've seen a lot of miles, enjoyed improvements in the ultrasound world and developed a system to get them down the road efficiently.

"Steven is very goal-oriented," she says.

"When he sets his mind to something, it is going to happen. He has done that in all facets of our careers, and I'm proud of how hard he works."

Steven and Amy span a five-state area scanning an average of 8,000 head of cattle each year from Christmas through May. Though Amy no longer makes every trip, Steven logs about 35,000 miles a year traveling to ultrasound clients.

"Ultrasounding fits well with our other businesses, but it also puts us on our clients' doorsteps during their busiest times of year," Steven says. "Guys are calving, getting ready for production sales—it's really a season of ultimate stress. From equipment choices, ranch layouts, marketing plans and genetic selections, we get to see it all, which I think has helped us in our own ventures."

Rodeo, ultrasounding and two young children keep the couple hopping. However, they have other ventures too.

Steven grew up in a cattle operation near Davis, S.D. Today, he and Amy run about 100 registered Hereford cows and commercial recip cows of their own in Agar, S.D. Their herd produces show-quality animals and foundation-type females.

Their latest business addition—bucking horses—is an area Steven quietly admits to entering.

"We've been expanding more in the horse business, which makes Amy excited," Steven says as Amy laughs in the background. "We bought some bucking horses eight years ago."

Amy interjects, "Which, for the record, when we got married, he said he would never, ever own a horse. Now, his horse habit is a lot bigger than mine!"

The couple's horse herd includes eight brood mares, five horses that buck in Sutton Rodeo productions and the balance in colts. While Steven admits his hopes for the bucking horses really depend on the day, Amy knows they'll continue growing the venture in some capacity.

"This deal's pretty hot and cold, but we have tasted a little success by raising two circuit champions. I kinda like it," Steven says.

The young couple is excited to be part of Sutton Rodeo's growth, and they hope their own children develop an interest in joining the family businesses. For now, they are enjoying this phase of life.

"We live a very chaotic lifestyle," Amy says. "But, you just buckle down and get it done."

Steven adds, "Honestly, we don't know any better than chaos and busy. We just try to enjoy it all and keep moving forward."