



**MIKE PEARSON**  
Grinnell, IA

- 30-years-old
- Host of Market to Market on Iowa Public Television, owner of Genuine Pearson Cattle Company
- Lives near Grinnell, Iowa
- Simpson College, History degree

**BACKGROUND:** He was raised on a small farm at Winterset, Iowa. His father was the well-known Mark Pearson who was a regular face on Market to Market and a much sought after speaker. He himself entered ag broadcasting at the age of 18.

**WIFE:** Heidi and two dogs

**INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:** Member of Poweshiek County Cattlemen's Association.

**FUN FACT:** He was awarded the People's Choice award during the 2014 Iowa State Fair's Governor's Charity Steer Show beating out the Bachelor Chris Soules. His steer went on to sell for a record amount of money.

**ADVICETO OLDER PRODUCERS:** Make an effort to be a mentor. To your kids or to someone else's says Pearson. There is a whole age group of young people out there that need the skills and knowledge of the older generation.

**HOBBIES:** He enjoys dusting off his Minneapolis Moline G900 in the spring to go on organized tractor ride events. He also enjoys checking his cows and dreaming about the future of his cattle operation.

**MARKET USE:** Ag producers ignore markets at their peril, says Pearson. "The really good producers are going to know when to use that third option. You want to find a broker or analyst that talks about markets in a way you can understand. Someone who is willing to take your hand."

# MORE THAN MARKETS

BY CODI VALLERY-MILLS

It's the worst way to get a job. Your father dies and suddenly you are asked to fill in his shoes. That is exactly what happened to Mike Pearson in 2012 when his father Mark Pearson – longtime host of "Market to Market" on Iowa Public Television – passed away from a sudden heart attack.

"It was the worst way possible for me to get a job, but I love it," says Mike Pearson who is the new host of the ag program. "Each week is fascinating. I work with the greatest people and it's like a Masters Class in Ag every show."

Pearson is a 6th generation farmer. He grew up doing chores on his family's East Peru, Iowa farm and listening to his Dad talk markets. When he graduated from high school he himself entered the market news route and landed a job with WOI Radio in Ames giving ag market reports.

From there it is a bit of an eclectic work and education history for Pearson, who eventually found himself at a job with Lincoln Savings Bank in Grinnell, Iowa as a mortgage lender and ag lender in 2010.

"That job was an interesting way to learn about the power of interest and the importance of record keeping. The more proof and data you have for the USDA and bank, the better," says Pearson.

When he was in his early 20s, Mike's dad turned the management of his small cow herd over to him. It was something he enjoyed and he knew then cattle would play a role in his life.

Today he and his wife Heidi operate Genuine Pearson Cattle Company. The couple purchased an older feedyard on seven acres in 2010. Because of the feedlot scenario, the couple had to transition their cow calf herd into utilizing the yards year round.

The couple began to make improvements, and in 2013 and 2014, they made cattle purchases to increase their herd size. "Cows are still a great way for a beginning producer to build equity and show responsibility and operational improvement to bankers," notes Pearson.

As host of Market to Market, Pearson was asked to begin speaking at ag industry events. The time away forced them to downsize their cattle operation and refocus their efforts.

The future has Mike and Heidi working towards maintaining the small cowherd on pasture and then utilizing the feedlot for steer and heifer development.

"2015 had us still maintaining a 30 head cow herd with a focus on the Angus breed and had, for the first time in my life, a 100% calf crop without any twins. This year we plan to continue the focus on herd health and establishing protocols that can grow with the operation. Also, this will be the first year that we are going to retain and develop our own heifers; though we'll continue to bring in bulls from Nichols Farms," says Pearson.

## STARTING AT MARKET TO MARKET

Pearson gave the eulogy at his father's funeral. As the story goes, the producers of Market to Market were in the crowd and impressed. Ten days after the funeral they placed a call to Pearson who readily accepted the job offer.

"Dad made it look so easy. He would walk into the studio, take off his Carharts, put on a suit and tie, do the show and be done. I did not realize the kind of work it entailed," says Pearson. "I am really blessed with people that loved Dad and took a chance on me, John Nichols who is the now former Executive Producer for Market to Market was very forgiving and gracious in training me," says Pearson.

Market to Market is in its 40th season. It's the longest running farm show program in the country. Pearson feels that pressure. "You don't want to be the guy that the show ends with. I want to continue to help it get better."

So Pearson studies, reads and talks to others in the ag industry. While he lends his voice as the host of the whole show, he is responsible for the market to market report analysis segment of the program. "It is my job to understand and ask questions that the South Dakota rancher or Iowa corn farmer will find interesting and will help them be profitable," says Pearson.

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