

This past fall, my husband, Eddie, approached me about helping Aubrey Pettit with the opportunity to do an internship at our farm through the winter. His vision was that it would help a kid gain knowledge and understanding on day-to-day activities and challenges of a working cattle farm. Since we shoot to calve mostly in February this would also allow Eddie some help with our busiest time of the year and instill a tremendous amount of education for Aubrey.

Aubrey is a fellow JBAA member and lives in a Southern Texas, Sealy to be exact. Her background includes showing her Braunvieh cows for the last several years. Aubrey had little to no experience with the production side of the cattle industry. After having several conversations with Aubrey and her parents the plan was in motion. Aubrey worked hard to graduate mid-term so she could come to Southern Indiana for the winter. Our family was excited to welcome her, and our two girls could not wait to have a big sister for the winter.

In the middle of January Aubrey arrived at our home. And calving season was just getting started. We already had one calf on the ground and many more to come. We had a winter storm moving in and with Aubrey being from South Texas she had never encountered the frigid temperatures, snow, and ice. The first week in Indiana Aubrey had to learn the ropes. Which included dressing to stay warm in the severe winter weather and understanding that a new momma cow is not to be messed with.

Most days Aubrey was with Eddie learning how to care for cattle from the production side. She had no experience with this. She learned about feeding hay and keeping the feed pads clean. She learned about maintaining proper nutrition through the winter for the cattle. We have several different ages of cattle including weaned heifers and bulls, breeding age heifers, first calf heifers, and cows. Eddie educated her how to feed each group differently depending on their age

in production to ensure they develop properly, breed, and calve every year on time. I have a feeling nutrition is one topic Aubrey learned the most about.

Calving season was in full swing as previously mentioned. With that comes many ups and downs, long days, and even longer nights. The temperatures were cold and ensuring newborn calves stayed dry and warm was important. Aubrey learned a few tricks of the trade about bringing the calves in to warm up and drying them off. She got to encounter calving out heifers. Which led to her gaining knowledge on when it was appropriate to help a heifer have a calf. Which she had never done. So, with that she learned how to pull a calf as well.

Eddie partners with some other Braunvieh breeders putting a group of bulls on test in Cullman, Alabama. Aubrey was able to go down with the group to video and picture the bulls for the upcoming sale. She also assisted in clipping, torching, videoing, and picturing them. Aubrey learned a new respect for young bulls. She learned that they are huge and unpredictable animals. While in Cullman, she was able to be around several Braunvieh breeders and capture some insight into their extra pieces of knowledge.

Aubrey had to adjust and adapt to our rural community and lifestyle. In southern Indiana basketball is life, especially in the winter. So, we took Aubrey to a few basketball games in our downtime. She had never been to a basketball game, and she said she loved. Which was great because I watch a lot of NCAA basketball. We taught her the rules and general game knowledge. This made our evenings and weekends fun cheering on our favorite teams to win when March Madness started.

Our daughters Elynn and Natalie loved having Aubrey around the house and the barn. They teamed up to care for their show heifers and prepare for our next show in early April. All

three girls spent countless hours feeding, exercising, and washing the six heifers in the show heifer lot. Our family taught Aubrey what we know about showing heifers and in return she taught us a few of her tricks too. Caring for the show heifers is a daily task that we encourage the kids to manage. Eddie and I are there to help not do the work for them. We try to instill in them if they are going to show cows, they need to do the work. This is one thing Aubrey already understood. Being around our family for three months only reiterated it.

I would be interested to hear Aubrey say her biggest take away from her stay with us was. If I was going to guess, I would think it was the consistency it takes to run a farm. The day in and day out of chores to care for animals. I know Eddie and I were so impressed with Aubrey's ability to stay flexible and not quit. She stuck with every task that was asked of her. No complaints, just eagerness to learn. Being away from home and your family for the first time can be hard and Aubrey seemed to rock it. While at our home she gained a second family. We told her she was our new adopted daughter and meant it.