

FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR

We have more pictures from Angela and Alan Mahans' farm inside today



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Mahans, Rabbit Ridge Farms honored as Van Buren County Farm Family of the Year

By Alex Kienlen
Editor

Well sure it's a farm. And like any farm it begins with a plan. The 2019 Farm Family of the Year, Alan and Angela Mahan, had a plan.

"We weren't going to buy any more grocery store meat," Alan said.

What came from that decision set a stage, as it were, and prompted growth while taking a new tack on doing things.

Alan, a South Side '86 grad, had started out in farming, like so many people at what was at one time a dairy farm in Bee Branch, but had gotten into construction, was a contractor. He and Angela, from Mississippi County and the row-crop tradition, married in 2013. She pitched in at the construction company, and of course now at the farm.

The construction company is closed now, the emphasis on the farm.

And that began with the



The Mahans, Angela and Alan, taking a breather outside the hall where events can be hosted at Rabbit Ridge Farms.

plan: No more grocery store meat.

"We decided we need to feed our families better," Alan said.

It started out small, rent-

ed land – which Alan and Angela both are glad to get away from.

"[Rented ground] is like dating a high-end model," Alan said, "it ends in

heartache."

Now Rabbit Ridge, of the 240 acres in Van Buren County, is where Angus crossbred cattle, Duroc crossbred hogs and Cor-

nish crossbred chickens are raised. And the raising took a plan.

They got started selling beef, soon adding hog, selling halves and wholes from

freezers. And here's where the idea came, the importance of thinking outside the box (they both nodded here). Raising the grass, then raising the grass eaters, and it was time to take a different look at things, to get outside the tradition.

Things had been done a certain way, an expected way, for years, growing for a commodity market. Alan said they looked at it different. Rather than chicken coops and hog pens this was a chance to look at the ways these things had been done in the past, in what turns out to be a less expensive and cleaner means of production.

They added chickens, 1,000 year one now up to 20,000 this year, with plans (that word) for 100,000 soon.

And it's well received, the beef, the pork, the chicken, with restaurants, even meat processors lining up to buy. Farm-to-table is a popular phrase these days, and they

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