



Pilot Herd Case Study

Homesteaded in 1880, Lindow Farms near Chili, Wis., has been home to many sheep and pigs over the course of its existence. As the current owners and the fifth generation of Lindows on the farm, Kevin and Ann Lindow run about 380 acres and rent another 120.

Kevin and Ann took over the farm after they were married in 2004. Currently, about 50 head of sheep and 75 head of pigs reside at the Lindow premises. Other than trucking hay, the farm is Kevin and Ann's livelihood. Ann raised sheep as a 4-H member and learned to fit them for show at an early age. Kevin's father started the pigs, and Kevin continued with Durocs and Hampshires for his FFA Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE).

Kevin and Ann raise Durocs and crossbred pigs. They own 25 sows that they farrow year-round, with special timing of certain sows. "We typically aim to farrow the show piglets in January, February and March," explained Kevin.



Twenty ewes make up the production part of the Lindows' flock of registered Dorset sheep. The ewes lamb out in spring, and Lindows retain their best ewe lambs, selling some as breeding and market lambs. The Lindows also show their lambs and yearlings at regional shows. This year they also provided lambs for a local boy who is autistic. "We set him up with two lambs, helped him learn the basics, and he got to sell one at the fair," explained Ann.

Premises Registration

The Lindows learned about Wisconsin premises registration the first year it was offered. A Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC) representative mentioned it to Kevin and Ann, and they registered by mail. Movement of both sheep and pigs occurs frequently during show season as well as when sending animals to the sale barn.

Identification System

With some feeder pigs going to the sale barn, some going to a friend who raises them until slaughter, and some going to the Lincoln County Fair for "catch a pig" contests, Kevin found that he liked being able to send the pigs out with radio frequency identification (RFID) tags.

"We first heard about this program to use the RFID technology when it was sent around while my dad was on the pork board," stated Kevin. "And we wanted to be on the front end of the technology."

"By implementing RFID, none of our routines changed; we just added a simple step. We now get the opportunity to have the correct information right at our fingertips."

*– Kevin Lindow,
Lindow Farms
Owner/Operator*

Top 3 advantages of current system

1. Getting started with state of the art technology, so as to build their system around it.
2. Faster transfer of information.
3. Accurate information at their fingertips.

A palm pilot is utilized with the RFID tags in the sheep and pigs to keep farm records. Ann uses an Excel spreadsheet, that is easily updated when the reader and tags are used to record breeding, lambing and farrowing dates, and other information. Getting the system synchronized with the spreadsheet and in place was a little slow going when first starting out, but the Lindows found that once they devoted time to setting it up, it was much simpler than they originally suspected.

Kevin and Ann's sheep and pigs are tagged as they are retained for breeding stock. "The pigs are typically tagged at breeding age, so around six to eight months or 200 to 300 pounds," said Kevin. The spring lambs are tagged in June and July before show season. Kevin and Ann completed tagging all animals on the farm in June of 2008.

"We hand mate the pigs so we scan the tag then," explained Kevin. "If we think they are getting close to farrowing, we can scan the tag then to check their breeding date and assess how close they are to parturition."

Values Gained

• **Accurate Record-Keeping** – The Lindows now have an easier, faster system of recording breeding dates and other useful information when working with the sheep or pigs. Ann finds it easier to transfer the information from hand-held to computer rather than writing everything down and trying to decipher numbers later.

• **Tailored Technology** – The technology was tailored to their management practices early on, saving them time and eventually money. Kevin and Ann easily have adjusted to working with the technology and have found the easiest means for them to implement it for their operation.

• **Safety** – Between sale barns and shows the Lindows attend, the implementation of an animal identification system is saving them the possible losses that could be incurred if an animal disease would be passed. While they have added another step to their management system, Kevin and Ann believe that the addition of RFID will make it easier to identify sick animals, and in the end, safeguard their flocks.



Future Outlook

Kevin and Ann Lindow foresee continuing and eventually expanding the RFID program they have already put in place. "We've seen the ill effects of the pseudo rabies scare in pigs, and it would have taken out a lot of the leg work if every premises was at least registered," said Kevin.

Eliminating, or at least reducing, contamination is something they feel is very important and can be handled with animal identification. The Lindows believe that ID is necessary, and they see the need for a mandatory system, which they believe isn't too far from becoming a reality.

Lindow Farms produces production oriented hogs that are lean and functional. Though they haven't yet seen a swing towards the trend, Kevin and Ann believe that in the future, consumers will be willing and able to pay a premium for product that has animal identification.

