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Practicing in the areas of real estate, estate planning and elder law
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Jason Aanenson, DDS, PC

Dr. Jason Aanenson · Dr. Trevor Kuiper
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Roth Realty, LLC - Glenn Roth, Broker

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Shane Vetch

Modern Woodmen of America Financial Representative
1008 E. Industrial Street, Freeman SD 57029
Phone: 605-925-1234 (office) · email: Shane.Vetch@mwarep.org

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To be included in this listing,
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AGRICULTURE



Tom and Jenna Graber grew up with an interest in animals and agriculture, but came at it from different perspectives. Now, after marrying in 2014, they farm together 7 miles south of Marion. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Side-by-side in
farming and faith

DENNIS LEHMANN

✉ FOR THE COURIER

Jenna and Tom Graber started farming together in 2014, the same year they were married. Their farm is located 7 miles south of Marion, and features a commercial cow/calf operation and minimum tillage crops.

They are living on Tom's grandparents' farm, across the section from where Tom grew up. From a young age, he appreciated the farm and always wanted to be a farmer. He grew up raising hogs and operating equipment on the farming operation. Tom returned to the farm in 2010 after graduating from the Diesel Technology program at Lake Area Tech in Watertown.

Jenna grew up near Huron and learned a lot about stock cows from her uncle's purebred Hereford ranches. She helped herd cattle on her horse Sunny during weaning, when they would dehorn, castrate and vaccinate calves in the fall. Today she enjoys talking with her uncles about bulls, breeding, and other aspects of the cattle business.

One of Jenna's aunts, who at the time was a nurse in the military, encouraged her to become

a veterinarian for the military. After one year at Northern State University in Aberdeen, Jenna transferred to South Dakota State University in Brookings, but decided to major in animal science and agronomy, instead of applying for vet school. Jenna values her education at SDSU on a daily basis caring for their 160 cow calf operation.

On the farm she takes a leadership role working with the livestock while Tom enjoys managing the crops with his dad Tim. All three of them are capable and important to completing all of the varied jobs associated with the crop farming operation.

Tom and Jenna use both theirs, and Tim's farmyards for their cattle operation. All of the calving is done at Tim's farm, where Tom and Jenna built a calving barn with cameras installed inside. The cows can be monitored via internet with a computer or iPhone from anywhere with an internet connection. Since they live on another farm, this

increases the ability to closely monitor the cows during critical parts of calving. Cows can be watched from a distance, and at night, while reducing actual hours spent watching or checking the cows in person. Tom and Jenna, with help from a grant through SDSU, have also been incorporating Artificial Insemination, or A.I. breeding, into their commercial cow herd. By using the A.I. method,

their goal is to group their calving closer together, while incorporating new genetics into their herd without having to purchase high-dollar bulls. Using cameras and close monitoring are especially useful due to the high concentration of calves being born in a short period of time.

The Graber's minimum tillage operation was begun by Tom's dad Tim, about 12 years ago. Minimum tillage or Strip tilling is a concept that uses very little or no conventional spring and fall tillage to plant the crop. They use



CONTINUED ON 9A: GRABERS