

I grew up in Lethbridge in the city and wasn't involved in farming at all. I went to the University of Lethbridge and got a degree in kinesiology and HR management. I started my career in Edmonton in the kinesiology field and did personal training. From there, I ended up taking a job with an engineering firm in an HR assistant role and that's how I ended up in the HR field. I worked with the engineering firm for a bit, worked with Health Canada and worked in the hospitality industry before moving back to Lethbridge.

I moved back to open a TaeKwon-Do studio with my husband and that's when I became associated with the ag industry when I started working with Kasko Cattle Company. I'm coming up on two years with Kasko. I know HR but agriculture has been totally new to me.

Tell us about your role and what your "typical day" looks like.

At Kasko I'm the HR Manager. When I first started I really focused on understanding what the company does and implemented HR services and programs. Now, it's about upkeep and helping with recruitment. There are various projects I work on and I do some work with other feedlots if they need HR help.

I've been able to improve the recruitment process by standardizing steps, doing proper interviews and focusing on the right fit for specific roles. We've also standardized performance reviews and we do employee engagement surveys to see how people are feeling, what they are looking for from the company and what we need to change. I spend a lot of time working directly with employees to help them with administrative questions about benefits and other needs.

Lots of my role at the beginning was standardizing practices that were already in place and making tweaks to systems that were working well.

I really enjoy the variety of my job.

How do you define personal success? What steps do you take to get there?

If I can do things that help others be happier, healthier and achieve their goals that's success to me.

I also set big goals for myself. One big goal for me over the past two years that I'm proud of is what I've learned about feedlots and the ag industry in general. When I first started with Kasko, I didn't know anything. I had to do a lot of learning in the beginning and I continue to learn.

Kasko has been supportive in helping me learn. They are good about sending me to different industry conferences which has been really helpful. Often the sessions aren't directly related to HR but they give me an opportunity to learn about the industry as a whole and network with different people.

When I first started I did job shadowing and that was really important to learn from the ground what their typical day looks like. I had never stepped foot on a farm before I started working for Kasko and I was there in my pink rubber boots pushing cattle and that was a great learning experience.

What's the biggest professional/personal challenge you've had to face? And what did you learn from that experience?

Overall, it's balancing everything. I'm a TaeKwon-Do and fitness instructor as well. My husband and I run our own TaeKwon-Do studio in Lethbridge and I also have a three-year-old son so things are very busy right now. I just got back from Ireland where I represented Canada at the 2017 ITF World TaeKwon-Do Championships. This was a huge accomplishment for me and to be able to achieve this while succeeding in my career has been a rewarding challenge.

Finding the balance is about prioritizing and scheduling. With Kasko, I've found a schedule that works for me; where I can advance my career and still have activities outside of work that I enjoy.

Learning from our mistakes is an important, but sometimes tough, part of life. In the spirit of these profiles helping others, are you willing to share a mistake you made but taught you something important?

I don't have a specific example but overall, I know I don't always speak up when I should; or I'm not confident enough to speak up when I know that I have a good idea. I know there have been times I've kept quiet when I should have spoken up.

I'm learning to be brave and when I know something, to speak up. Especially when you're in a new industry, it's a big challenge. When you're new, you don't know what the norms are. But it's important to be confident and understand that you may have been hired because you have different ideas so you can't be afraid to share them.

What do you feel is a topic in agriculture and/or business that you feel isn't getting enough attention right now?

In the HR and agriculture space, I think recruitment is a big challenge. Introducing the idea of agriculture as a career to women and other minority groups that may not have thought about it as an option in their careers.

At Kasko we've done sessions where we talk to college students and high school classes. We've even had younger kids – grades 1-3 – come on tours of the feedlot.

When I think about my experience, I went through all of high school, university and the first seven years of my career without knowing there was opportunity in agriculture. And that's something that's missing along the way.

I stumbled upon agriculture when I moved back to Lethbridge. But even growing up in a city surrounded by agriculture, I had no idea there was such opportunity.

Do you have a piece of advice for young women starting their career in agriculture?

I go back to the piece about finding confidence. When I started my job, I was really nervous to start in a whole new industry but I was really open to learning from others. Everyone has valuable experience that they can share and you can learn from others and take that all in. But you also have to have confidence in yourself and trust your gut; be brave.