

THE THOMAS FARMSTEAD

INSIGHT INTO A BEGINNING FARM IN KENSSETT, IOWA



PASTURE RASIED - NUTRIENT DENSE - HAPPY FOOD

The Thomas Farmstead is a beginning farm that sells pasture raised chickens, pork, and turkeys on their farm in Kensett, Iowa. Owners Aaron and Dana, along with their two children, work hard to bring quality products to their customers. Both The Thomases are active in the effort to build the local food system in North Iowa, with Dana being the current Board Chairperson of the Healthy Harvest of North Iowa and Aaron as an active participant of the NI Local Food Connection program.

We recently caught up with Aaron Thomas to get some insight into their operation, and what farming means to them.

How do you describe your farm?

The Thomas Farmstead is 10 acre pasture-based farm that produces meat chickens, pork, and turkeys. We market our chicken to Simply Nourished, restaurants, and direct-to-consumer. Our pork and turkey is direct marketed to consumers. Our monthly meat subscription box is beginning to take off. A major priority for us is to use regenerative agricultural practices in our production. These regenerative practices include pasture rotation and keeping soil covered as much as possible.

When did your farm get started?

We purchased our acreage in April of 2016 with no intention of farming, just a garden and some backyard laying chickens. In an attempt to clear some land using animals, we got our first 10 pigs (the beginning of the farm) in April of 2017. I pre-sold all the pigs except for two which we ate and realized I wanted to raise more pigs the next year. In April of 2018 we started raising meat chickens because a market opportunity (an account with Simply Nourished) had opened up.

SUCSESSES & CHALLENGES OF FARMING

Why did you start your operation?

In the beginning we just wanted to grow better food for ourselves than what we could find in the grocery store. At the time, we weren't aware of the locally produced food that was available. Being a serial entrepreneur, and wanting to turn everything I love to do into a business I started seeking a market. I figured if I'm going to go through the work to produce food for myself I might as well do a little more and sell it. At the very least, my food will be paid for by the sale of the extra.

What is your vision for your farm?

I love this question because I'm a dreamer! I'd like to slightly expand the meat chicken enterprise to 1,000-1,500 meat chickens per year. We are currently at 800. To expand the pastured/grass fed pork to sell 30-40 pigs per year either as feeders (to homesteaders), breeding stock piglets, and grow pigs out for our customers. To add beef (a small amount) to our subscription boxes. To add lamb (a small amount) to our subscription boxes. I would love to be able to purchase additional land that used to belong to our farmstead back in the day.

What resources do you recommend to new and beginning farmers?

Start with Healthy Harvest. I've also learned a lot from YouTube, podcasts, and Facebook groups.

What is the biggest barrier you have encountered?

It often takes an entire season/year to learn a lesson or what works and what doesn't. I'm still trying to figure out the perfect feed ration for my pigs.

What has helped your business overcome challenges?

Healthy Harvest has helped us get going through networking, making us aware of market opportunities, and general business coaching through workshops.

Any parting words of wisdom to share?

Seek the strengths of others to help you, and contribute your strengths to those that need them.

Contact The Thomas Farmstead:

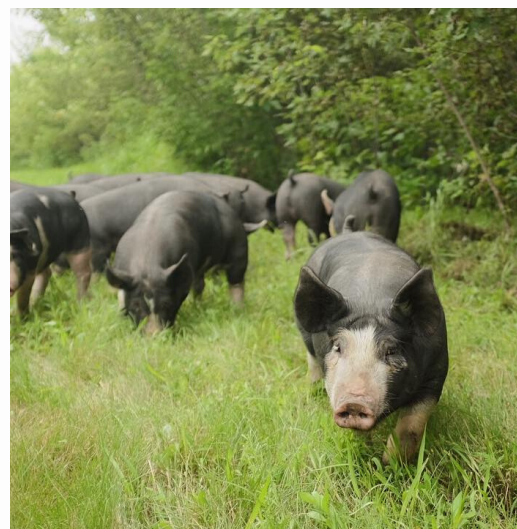
Phone: (515) 257-6216

Email: thethomasfarmstead@gmail.com

Follow them on Facebook &

Instagram: [@thethomasfarmstead](https://www.instagram.com/thethomasfarmstead)

Web: www.thethomasfarmstead.com



WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHER FARMERS?

Network! You will learn many things and you may find a path to take through networking.

