

Blom Selected as Pipestone County Conservation Farmer of the Year for 2017

**Article written and published by the Farm Market News*

Roger Blom is Pipestone County's Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Conservation Farmer of the year for 2017.

Located in Grange Township north and slightly east of Pipestone, Blom's farm was once his parents', Albert and Grace, who moved there in 1950. They began with 160 acres, and Blom said he always knew he wanted to take over the farm. After working a few jobs off the farm, he did just that in the 1980's and since then, has increased the acreage to 550 acres, rotational row-cropping corn and soybeans.

Blom was surprised to be selected as Pipestone's County's Conservation Farmer of the year.

"I called and asked Stephanie [Stephanie LaBrune, Administrative Assistant at Pipestone SWCD] 'isn't there anyone more qualified than me?'" he said with a chuckle. "She said, 'You've done a lot of things over a lot of time and that's kind of what they're rewarding.'"

When speaking of his conservation practices, Blom said, "I just want to protect the farm."

"Roger was chosen because of his conservation-minded planning approach he applies to his whole farm," said Adam Ossefoort, Pipestone County SWCD conservationist. "Roger has participated in cost share programs to install water and sediment control basins and grassed waterways along with conservation cover programs. He currently uses conservation tillage programs and is actively trying to incorporate cover crops into his cropping program. He is also in the process of becoming certified in the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Program."

Blom said his conservation efforts started with his father's interest in preserving the land.

"He did it to protect the farm, to keep it viable," he said. "There's always been some form of conservation farming."

It was the early 1980's when they first began experimenting with no tilling, Blom said, to protect the soil and water quality and potentially lower some costs.

"We started by no tilling beans into corn stalks and have made improvements since then," said Blom, who receives some hired help on his farm, and also help from his brother, Lyle.

Blom said he's always trying different conservation practices. He's installed sediment basins, does minimum and no-till fields, collects soil tests and works with manure management.

"I don't have any special feelings on it," he said. "It's just kind of the way you do it."

He's found that the sediment basins clean-up the water and slow-down erosion and have been the most beneficial conservation practice he's used so far.

While he's had good experiences, he's learned lessons along the way. Soil testing and manure management have helped him make giant conservation strides from years ago, he said. And technology has helped in the conservation process.

"The precision aspects have changed things a lot," Blom said.

For those interested in conservation practices, Blom recommends experimenting. He calls the local SWCD when he has a question about something, adding that they're always good to answer.

"There's nothing difficult about using conservation practices on the farm," Blom said. "It takes a little more management, but it takes less work so it evens out."

In the future, Blom said he hopes his nieces, Leah and Emily, the daughters of brother Lyle and Lyle's wife, Julie, keep the farm and find a good operator to rent it. But, he added, he doesn't see himself retiring anytime in the near future.