



Neufeld Farms

Abbotsford BC



Devoted parents and partners

Imagine this: you're 18 years old, and not yet finished high school, when your father tells you that he has decided to retire from farming and that your five older siblings are not interested in carrying on the family business. He wants to know now if you would like to purchase the family farm. So, what do you do?

Well, if you're Dan Neufeld, you jump at the chance and plunge right in.

That's exactly what Dan did over 20 years ago, which is why Neufeld Farms has served the Abbotsford community for over 30 years.

Although the farm began strictly as a raspberry operation, it was soon diversified in order to balance out the farm's earnings. Corn, pickling cucumbers, broiler chickens, beets, and dill weed have all been added over time. The Neufelds have also diversified by opening a year-round chicken shop on their property, where they also sell their in-season produce; putting together chicken fundraisers for community groups; and even placing tarps over their corn in order to get a jump on the growing season.

Audrey, Dan's wife and business partner, explains simply, "Everything we do, we gamble. We're farmers."

While success does involve luck, it also involves a whole lot of hard work. Dan and Audrey both farm fulltime, dividing up the work according to their individual strengths. Dan runs the farm itself, manages the poultry and the fields, and purchases all products and supplies. Audrey takes care of the books, retail sales, marketing, and customers.

Up until about six years ago, however, Dan also worked off the farm for in order to supplement their income. He now prefers the flexibility of just being a farmer. "I enjoy being self employed and making decisions that can affect positively or negatively and you only have one person to blame," he explains.

As for Audrey, she loves the outdoors and the fact that farming allows her to work at home. "I love the work. I love being outside. I love living in the countryside," she comments. "It's also fun because I don't feel guilty for working because my kids can still be around. I really want to be an at-home mom; but in what we're doing, I can be at home plus work, so it turns out really well. I get to be with them; they get to be with me."

According to Audrey, farming fulltime also allows her and Dan to work around their kids' schedules. "The flexibility we

have right now is to be with our kids and they're in a lot of sports and athletic activities, so that is our number one priority," she explains. In fact, the chicken and produce shop hours have even been scheduled to accommodate their kids' activities. "The reason we're closed on Tuesdays and Thursdays is that the kids play basketball at school on those days, so that allows us to go their games," she explains.

The Neufelds' focus on family has also carried over to their relationships with customers, many of whom have been coming to Neufeld Farms for over 20 years. "We're a mom-and-pop shop," Dan comments. "We're the same faces and family every year. A lot of customers have seen our kids grow up."

While there is no question that, for the immediate future, their kids' activities will dictate how Dan and Audrey schedule their life, this is not, according to Dan, a permanent arrangement.

Grabbing the tape recorder in a spontaneous fit of passion and good humour, Dan declares, only half jokingly, "We will have our own life – soon!"

FARM FACTS

Employed –
seasonal: 8 to 10
year-round: 1

Gross Farm Sales –
\$1.5 million

Land Owned –
13 acres

Land Leased –
15 acres