

Doreen Neilley

Doreen Neilley and her husband Peter live north of Drayton Valley, Alberta. They run a cow – calf operation with a herd of individually registered Plains bison.

Doreen was born and raised in Alberta, Canada, while Peter was born in Australia. After they married, Doreen spent 16 years there with him, raising cattle and their kids on 3 different properties, the last one being a big rough block.

After selling their last cattle property in Australia so that they could move to Canada, they bought their first bison in Canada in 1999 (18 heifers from 2 sources) and took delivery of them in 2000. They got into bison because they knew that they wanted to keep raising livestock but couldn't see themselves checking calving cows at all hours of the day and night during winter months. Doreen is a cousin of Mel Matthews and he was happy to talk to them about bison.

For most things on the farm, Doreen and Peter manage everything on their own. In fact, because of work, Peter is away most of the time, and Doreen does a lot of the day to day management.

Having raised high-content Brahmans in Australia, they don't find the attitude of bison that different! They are both wonderful when things are going well, but look out when they have a bad hair day! Doreen and Peter insist on only keeping cows that produce quality calves regularly, have good conformation and feet, and protect their calves from predators but are calm when people are around them. They look for breeding bulls from other producers who have the same attitudes.

Doreen has been a director for the Bison Producers of Alberta since March 2014. She is passionate about bison, and improving the landscape under her control by using holistic methods.

She was involved with her community in Australia as a Scout Leader, in the Land Care movement, the Exec Link group (a farmer – rancher holistic management self-help and education group that is now operating world-wide), and Pony Club, and participates here in Canada in Search and Rescue, and a Fine Arts Society. Besides bison, Doreen is also involved in art (painting and drawing, and making jewellery), family history research, and archery.