



In 30-plus years, they have grown the herd to 350 Hereford-Angus cows and calves. Along the way, Porter invested in the chicken business, expanding that operation to 68,000 broiler pullets and 30,000 broiler egg layers for Tyson Foods. The third leg of the livestock operation includes 2,200 large, white sows that breed between 102 and 105 pigs per week for Murphy-Brown.

Porter's family has been a large part of his farm's success. "We've always been a very tight, close family," he says. Growing up, his sons, Derek and Jared, and his daughter, Erin, performed daily chores and remained interested in the farm. Even though they've all got other full-time

careers these days, Derek, a firefighter, still works the farm on his days off (see "Smooth Ride, Terrific Visibility" for his take on his dad's Massey Ferguson® tractor). And Jared's wife, Colleen, now manages the layer houses.

"Tommy started with a dream," says Chip Blalock, executive director of Sunbelt Ag Expo. "He didn't inherit anything. He did it all the old fashioned way from scratch." Judges considered the scope of Porter's success a major factor when naming him the 2011 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year.

Because Porter's livestock operation has gotten so large, one of his biggest concerns is biosecurity. "We've got to make sure

no disease makes it onto the farm that will affect [the animals]," he says. The hog operation is the most sensitive, so Porter is very restrictive on managing who comes in and out of the hog house. The employees shed their street clothes, take showers and put on farm clothes before working the swine. If anyone has been to another hog farm, they can't come back to the Porter farm for 72 hours.

Another reality in this business is mortality. But instead of contracting a company to dispose of the carcasses—another potential for spreading disease—Porter takes care of all of them on-site by adding them to his massive composting facility.

That facility is a major part of the farm's operation. Its base is the litter gathered from his six chicken houses. After it's sufficiently cooked down and analyzed for nutrient values, he then applies it to the land as fertilizer. He also utilizes the hog

... **more at myFarmLIFE.com**

See the video about Tommy Porter's biosecurity program, his efforts to be a good neighbor and why his MF5450 is "better than a John Deere" at go.myFarmLife.com/fromthelandup.