

It's another sunny day at my house. The rooster is crowing and I grab my long checklist for the day. Move cattle, wash horse buckets, walk oxen, clean pond, weed garden, bottle-feed lambs, and the list goes on. But it's nothing new to me – this is my reality. And they don't feel like chores any longer, just simply a way of life.

Hello. My name is Lieschen Beretta and I am 14 years old. My family and I live on an 800-acre organic livestock farm in King City, Ontario. When I talk about my family I mean my parents Mike and Cynthia, my older brother Thomas, and my twin brother Marcus.

Even though we all help out on the farm, we have a full-time farm manager as well, Emma Rhind. Although you'd typically think it would be a male running a farm, it's been nice having a female role model on the farm. I have now learnt that even if I'm not as strong as most boys, or my brothers, it doesn't mean I can't get it done in my own way. Though we still have our family disagreements, which can range from how things are done on the farm to what we are having for dinner, we will always have one thing in common: our passion for farming and the place we live, which I think makes our family stronger than most.

When school is out in the summer, my brothers and I work on the farm. From moving cattle to mucking stalls, we do it all. What I love most about farming is watching the animals grow. All the hours I spend fixing fencing or stacking hay is just a part of the process. One of the best things about working on my family's farm is having my horse, Red. Nothing reminds me more of the Old West, or how far we've come, than checking cattle on horseback.

During the year we hold many big events at the farm. Leading up to these events it can become quite stressful trying to get everything ready. Most people expect a beautiful, perfectly clean farm like those in magazines but no matter how much we clean, ours is still a working farm and we try to remind people of that. On the day of an event my belly is full of butterflies and I worry about what people will think of the place I love so much. The events give people the opportunity to visit and experience what farming and my life are all about. When I see a kid take their first pony ride and I think about my first time, it brings a smile to my face. And that makes it all worthwhile.

Growing up around animals has given me a lot of opportunity to see different careers in the animal business. Out of all of these, being a veterinarian stands out the most. Being a vet allows you to help animals in need, and that alone makes me want to go in that direction. I know that eight extra years of studying will be a lot of work, but knowing that one day I can make a difference is enough to keep me motivated. Even though I will be a vet, I would one day like to have my own farm and animals. I couldn't imagine living any other way.

Most teenagers spend their weekends at the mall but you can find me out in the barn with hay in my hair instead. And some days when my friends tell me about how great a movie was – one I missed because I

was chasing an escaped cow – I feel like I'm missing out on normal growing-up things. I know I am lucky, though, since I get to see baby animals being born, watch them take their first steps, see my horse in the field, and experience things every day that most people will never get to. Living on a farm is a lot of responsibility but I wouldn't change the way I was raised or the life my parents chose for us. I would much rather hear the sound of a donkey braying out my window than a car horn honking.

So, have I convinced you to give up the city life and start farming? Yes, it can be hard at times. But I am surrounded by great influences, like my parents and Emma. I get the chance to see how much of an impact my farm makes on kids and adults alike, and let them experience a bit of my life. I know I have a long way to go before I am a vet and out on my own, but this upbringing has been a big step in the right direction. Maybe one day I will be writing an article about what it's like to be a vet or some big discovery I made! But for now, I am a farmers' daughter and proud to be one. ☺

Lieschen Beretta is 14 years old and just started high school. She has grown up on Beretta Organic Farms, her parents' livestock farm in King City, Ontario. Her hobbies include competitive swimming, horseback riding, and reading. In future she hopes to become a large-animal veterinarian and live on her own farm someday.



Above and at left: Lieschen Beretta on her family farm.

Editor's note: This is Lieschen's second article for *Edible Toronto*. She wrote her first one at age ten and it appeared in our premiere, Fall 2007 issue. To read Lieschen's previous story, go to the Explore tab on our website, click on "Current & Past Issues Online," and then click on the Fall 2007 issue. The article is on page 36.