Most Nebraska farmers and ranchers don’t see themselves as special, and few seek the spotlight. It’s been that way since our pioneer ancestors began settling the Nebraska prairie even before statehood 150 years ago.

Homesteaders mostly raised crops and livestock to feed their families. Today’s farmers and ranchers feed the world, thanks to constant improvements in planting and harvesting equipment, seeds, livestock genetics, irrigation systems, road and rail transportation, and international trade agreements.

Although high-tech practices allow more food to be grown on the same acres, sometimes tried-and-true ways work best.

That was reflected on a sunlit Saturday morning in a pasture south of Smithfield. A cool north breeze that had pushed away a week’s worth of hot, humid air carried along the songs of meadowlarks sitting on fenceposts and hiding in the grass.

It’s a scene from the Old West, five Cross Diamond Cattle Co. ranch hands on horseback and two excited cattle dogs headed into the grass-covered hills to gather cows and calves for branding, vaccinations and fly-control treatments.

The cattle were owned by Scott and Kim Kearney Hub

IT TAKES LESS than a minute for a Cross Diamond Cattle Co. crew to brand and vaccinate a calf. At left, ranch hand Andy Nation holds the calf while owner Scott Ford of Bertrand applies the brand. Vaccination-fly treatment team members include Ford’s daughters, Jocie and Marie, standing right, and twins Riana and Sheridan Chaney, daughters of Lee and Becky Chaney who also live and work at the commercial herd ranch site near Elwood.

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IT WAS A beautiful morning June 17 for a ride in a sunlit pasture on my registered cattle. From left are Cross Diamond ranch hands Marcus Eggleston, Andy Nation, Megan Cable and Kyle Rademaker. They have worked at several spring branding days for commercial herd cattle owned by Scott and Kim Ford of Bertrand, who also have a registered Red Angus herd.

A CALF BAWLS for its mother after cows and calves were separated for branding and vaccinations.

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Visit kearneyhub.com to view a gallery of cattle roundup photos.
“Every day is different and it’s always challenging. The seasons change and you’re off to do something different. And the weather is different every year.”

Kim Ford on why she never tires of hard work required to raise cattle.