

Farming with a Smart Phone

Every month I team up with [U.S. Cellular](#) and share a little about my Samsung Galaxy S8 Smart Phone. This is one of those posts.

It's harvest time here. Hubby is gone late nights and I'm not seeing much of him. Every year I always think to myself, I've done this year after year. Having him gone should be easier...but it's not. The first few nights when he is in the field I am guiltily excited. I don't have to make supper...I don't have to work around his schedule. I can do whatever I want. I can sew to my heart's content. After two days of that, reality sinks in and I miss talking. I miss interacting. I miss his presence. It has yet to get easier.

Well that's not exactly true. In some ways it has gotten easier. Now days, I can at least talk to him on his phone. I'm really thankful that advance in technology.

When we were first married there was no way for me to contact him during the day. He would often call me on the barn land line phone and tell me he was going to the field. I never knew when he was coming. I'd worry if it was late...I've worry if he showed up early. I had no idea when he was coming so I learned to half cook meals and then finish cooking them when he arrived. But-some nights, he was so tired, all he wanted was sleep. So then I had made meals and he didn't even eat them.

Now that he has his own smart phone and things have gone so much easier. Typically now he calls me a couple times during the day. Then in the early evening. In that last call he'll tell me when he thinks he might be home and if he wants food or not. That has been so nice for me. What else is nice is that I can call him. So often something comes up during the day that I want to talk to him about...you know things like

insurance questions, if he needs anything in town...those kind of things. Smart phones have made harvest less taxing.

Being able to communicate with their families isn't the only way that phones are helping farmers.

Vehicle/Fleet Monitoring: The farm's John Deere tractors have GPS technology that use U.S. Cellular's network to provide remote monitoring, and access to the controls and input/output of the tractors. The farm's team uses their iPads to access this information and track the location of each tractor, which allows remote support of the fleet.



Irrigation/Soil Monitoring: They use a technology called variable rate seeding to take soil samples of the fields to formulate a "prescription" based on the data of the nutrients and pH levels of the soil. The prescription is then run by their fertilizer spreaders in the tractors which are automatically controlled to provide the correct nutrients to the right spots in each field, providing a greater crop yield. The irrigation system includes 11 pivots that are controlled remotely using an app on their smartphone or tablet.

Wearables for Goats: The goats are all fitted with radio frequency identification ankle bracelets. These bracelets are scanned with a wand device, so they can identify any of the 2,000+ goats. Helpful information such as the goat's age, vaccinations and milk fat percentage can easily be looked up on their mobile devices.

Cheese Production: All of the goat's milk, which is about 7,000 pounds a day, is converted into cheese. Since 2005, the Creamery has grown to a current daily production capability of 6,000 pounds of handcrafted fresh and aged cheese. Real-time access via their mobile devices to information about the quality of the milk, temperature of the coolers and tanks helps to make the process more efficient, leads to better quality and yields increased production volume. Overall, Heartland Creamery has been able to cut cheese production time down by 67% with the use of smart technology that allows them to monitor and power operations remotely.

Having the technology cell phones offer does make things a whole lot smoother during harvest but I still will admit, it's still a little lonely being a farm widow.