

Ranching's Past And Future

Ranchers Must Attract Younger Generations To Land, UNL Extension Educator Cautions

BY LINDA WUEBBEN
P&D Correspondent

VALENTINE, Neb. — At the sixth annual Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska (ICON) convention last weekend in Valentine, Scott Cotton told the cattlemen he supported his habit and love for ranching with a job as an Extension educator.

Cotton has worked as for the University of Nebraska Extension for 23 years and calls Dawes County home.

But Cotton had a little good news from recent research he completed in Dawes County. In the 4-H clubs county-wide there was a 113 percent increase in members. He had 200 members this year and 39 of those were Clover Kids.

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SCOTT COTTON

"That's a bright future," said Cotton. "The numbers of young kids are going up and now I have a large group of youth who are learning to be leaders — who like agriculture and believe in what we do in rural America."

But when Cotton looks back 10 years and then forward 20 years, he sees a huge disaster looming.

"I believe there is a landscape-changing event waiting to happen in rural America," said Cotton.

In the future, there will be traditional ranches, corporate ranches, hunting preserves and geriatric ranches. He said that's for all the old ranchers still in the business and getting even older every day.

In the future, ranchers and farmers can be sure there will be production increases, changes in prices, an increase in labor needs because the owners are getting older, schools will close, taxes will increase, regulations will increase and non-ranching enterprises will increase. No surprises there.

Recent census figures show 69 of the 93 Nebraska counties lost population to the tune of 27,999 residents.

During a morning panel of discussion with three Nebraska state senators, ICON members heard that the population in Nebraska had an increase of 100,000 residents but they were not in farming and ranching country. The biggest gainers of people were cities close to the I-80 corridor and eastern Nebraska.

"It is crucial at this point we increase human capital in Nebraska in rural areas," said Cotton. "We need to take a hard look at turning over the ranches to the next generation before more recreational areas take away any



more farm and ranch ground."

Cotton's presentation was aptly named: "Kicking the Gate Open for a New Ranch Generation."

The challenges for current owners in ranching country were easy to name. There will need to be resources for retirement because today's ranchers are getting older and there needs to be money for the future after ranching. The legacy of ranching and farming needs to be passed on to the next generation. Landowners must also face the emotional attachments they have for their ranch and farm and let go. That will be hard to do; it will be tough but for the rural culture to continue, it is necessary. There will be worry about the new management and there will be a debt load to pay off.

The next generation will also have huge challenges, and the first is a big one. They will have little or no equity. There will be high entry costs. The social resources in ranch country for a younger generation who is used to getting a burger on the corner, the newest fashions just down the block or frequent social interaction will be a big hurdle to climb. There will be a need for enticing more young people to an area, making it more attractive; and the technology has to be available for the phone service and computer use.

"When you think about a young person's life, think in nanoseconds," said Cotton. "Think family and friends,

and double that. That's what they are used to and want."

The next generation will have limited practical experience, limited patience, limited perseverance and unrealistic expectations.

"Those challenges should not surprise anyone either," said Cotton. He recommends the interested parties have a mentor with a plan.

"For 20 years, we have survived out here without Homeland Security and farmers have fed America," said Cotton.

The older generation needs to back off and be willing to relax. There needs to be a tangible agreement put down in writing in order to ease concerns on both sides. Keep the lines of communication open.

The next generation will need help. To do that, Cotton suggested such things as finding ways to create social opportunities, like having barn dances and taking shopping trips.

It will be very important to think forward. Remember, the younger rancher-wannabees believe they have some answers, too. Give them opportunities to be part of the operation; it will give them confidence and a stake in the ownership.

"Just remember — 4-H clubs in the Sandhills are growing," said Cotton. "The future is waiting."

Look Out For Hay Prices This Winter

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

It looks like it could be a bad winter, in terms of hay prices and availability.

An article from the Brownfield Ag News service reports that hay is being shipped from around the country into Texas to help cattle producers feed starving animals in this year of oppressive drought. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, hay prices hit \$170 per ton in July, and that doesn't include the fee to haul it; trucking can add \$70 per ton, so many livestock producers are looking at \$240 a ton to get forage to their animals.

And it's not even winter yet. My husband and I had already decided to cut down on the number of animals we'll be feeding this winter, before I read this article. Our reason centers on medical costs of having a new baby, but it looks like this decision has good timing. Our pastures are good — thanks to timely rains this summer — and we hope to graze through the cold months until next spring, only breaking out the alfalfa bales leftover from last winter in the case of a heavy snow.

Last year, we were able to graze exclusively through December. We supplemented with alfalfa from then until April, when the pastures greened up again, but we did have some milking problems from undernourished animals. So, we're thinking that by getting down to a minimal herd size that we'll be able to avoid this problem. Barring a lengthy string of snowstorms, we should have plenty of grass to continue grazing our herd.

We're not the only producers looking to downsize. I spoke with an area producer earlier today who said she and her husband are planning to reduce their herd down to a quarter of its current size. The reason: Hay prices are too high to justify a large herd. Down in Texas, according to Brownfield, most producers have sold off every animal in their herd except their core bunch of cows, but some are now starting to send those cows to market. It's either that or they starve. Good thing that cattle prices remain strong, but the Texas cattle herd is expected to be 12 percent smaller by the end of the year.

While I doubt it'd be as severe as a reaction, that same trend — selling off part of the herd — is bound to start happening in South Dakota and Nebraska, once producers realize that all their sources of hay have dried up. There's only so much a guy can do when, even if he has the money, he doesn't have the access to hay.



Rita BRHEL

Calf Value Discovery Program Sign-Up Deadline Oct. 15

BROOKINGS — The Calf Value Discovery Program provides South Dakota cow-calf producers with the opportunity to assess the value of their cattle in value-based marketing systems and gain valuable carcass and feedlot performance information to aid in management decisions and improve profitability.

The program is co-coordinated by Ben Holland, Extension Beef Feedlot Specialist and Julie Walker, Extension Beef Specialist.

"The Calf Value Discovery Program allows producers who might have been interested in retained ownership to participate and learn about custom feeding without taking the risk of placing an entire pen," Holland said. "In addition, it allows cow-calf producers to get some information about how their calves perform after they leave the ranch. This information can help in making selection,

management, and marketing decisions for their cowherds down the road."

Producers consign a minimum of five, 500 to 800 pound steers to the Calf Value Discovery Program. Cattle are then fed in an accelerated finishing program, financed by South Dakota State University, at VanderWal Yards, Bruce.

The Cottonwood Experiment Station near Phillip is designated as a collection point for interested, western South Dakota producers. The Calf Value Discovery Program will provide transportation from the Cottonwood Station to VanderWal Yards. Producers may also transport their own cattle.

Cattle will be weighed by SDSU personnel periodically, and cattle owners will be sent performance updates and copies of their individual feed bills.

It costs cattle producers \$15/head to enroll their cattle in the program.

The cattle must be dehorned, castrated and healed prior to feedlot arrival. Cattle that must be dehorned or castrated at the feedlot will be so processed at the owner's expense. Calves do not need to be weaned or pre-conditioned to participate; however, program managers do ask that cattle producers let them know if the calves will be weaned or not, prior to arrival. All calves will receive a full series of vaccinations and de-wormer treatment upon arrival at VanderWal Yards.

The program reserves the right to refuse any steers that are outside the weight range or that have not been dehorned or castrated and healed. Feed, yardage and veterinary bills will be financed, and any death loss will be shared among all participants in the project.

Groups of cattle will be sold in truckload lots beginning approximately May

15. All cattle will be sold on a grid price system.

Send completed participation form and a \$15/head, non-refundable deposit to: Calf Value Discovery, South Dakota State University, Box 2170, Brookings, SD 57007. Participation forms are available at <http://www.sdstate.edu/ars/species/beef/calf-value/index.cfm>.

Make checks payable to: SDSU Department of Animal Science. Cattle will be received at the Cottonwood Experiment Station between 8 a.m. and noon MST on Nov. 7, 2011. Cattle will be received at VanderWal Yards between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. CST Nov. 8 or 9, 2011.

For any questions about the program, contact Julie Walker, julie.walker@sd-state.edu or Ben Holland, ben.holland@sdstate.edu, 605-688-5460.

Stockgrowers Offer Ireland Agriculture Tour

The South Dakota Stockgrowers Association is hosting an exciting, ten-day Ireland Agriculture tour from April 30-May 9, 2012, and is accepting reservations for the trip.

The unique tour includes visits to Irish dairy, sheep and cattle farms, two horse studs, and a cheese processing facility as well as tours of the Blarney Castle, traditional Irish villages, and the Atlantic coastline.

"This is an amazing way to experience Ireland that most people will never have the opportunity to do and we're very excited to share

it with everyone," said Silvia Christen, Development Director for the Stockgrowers Association. "This tour is customized for Stockgrowers and takes us to the romantic castles, historic cities and rural landscape of Ireland, but we'll also be out on several different farms and actually talking with Irish producers."

The tour will travel across Ireland, with stays in Dublin, Galway City, Cork, County Clare and a traditional rural village. Also included in trip are a tour and tasting at the Middleton Whiskey Distillery and

the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin.

A detailed itinerary for the entire tour can be found at www.southdakotastockgrowers.org or by calling Silvia at 605-342-0429. For reservations, contact Leslie Bowman at Dakota Travel by calling 605-341-0744.

"This is going to be a very fun and exciting trip," said Christen. "I'd encourage everyone to take a look at the schedule, and give us a call if you have any questions."

Cost of the trip is \$2494, and includes all hotel stays, breakfast each morning, most evening meals,

all activity and tour fees, professional tour guides, and all transportation in Ireland. Airfare is not included. Travel to and from the USA can be arranged from anywhere in the USA when making a reservation for the tour. A non-refundable deposit is required when making a reservation. Reservations will be taken as long as spaces are available and until Jan. 31, 2012.

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For our upcoming November/December HerVoice Magazine

Deadline: October 15 Watch to see if your recipe has been selected!

Please include baking/cooking times and number of people the recipe will serve.

Send Recipes To: Press & Dakotan HerVoice Recipes
Attn: Cathy Sudbeck
319 Walnut, Yankton SD 57078
or email to: cathy.sudbeck@yankton.net

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Avera Sacred Heart Hospital
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Fall Craft Bazaar

Friday, October 14th
7:00am to 5:00pm

Benedictine Center Main Lobby

Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations, dish towels, aprons, baby bibs, knitted American Girl doll clothes, shoe/umbrella bags, small pillows, and lots of miscellaneous items.

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All proceeds benefit the patients/residents of Avera Sacred Heart.