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CAN YOU AFFORD THE WRONG FUNGICIDE IN 2026?



With disease concerns, erratic weather and market uncertainty in 2026, safeguarding revenue is key and a critical component is protecting the crop itself. When every bushel counts, choosing the right fungicide is a priority to help ensure maximum yield and ROI preservation. One fungicide continues to earn trust across seasons — turn the page to see why Miravis® Neo stands apart.

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INSIDE**



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CAN YOU AFFORD THE WRONG FUNGICIDE IN 2026?

With an unpredictable season ahead, 2026 is a year where smart input decisions can make the difference. As you finalize fungicide plans, weather variability, disease pressure and market uncertainty are converging — putting more at stake and raising a simple question: **can you afford a protection gap?**

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- Jake H., Retailer | MINNESOTA, 2025



*"Miravis Neo protected both corn and soybeans for us this year. On soybeans we had a 5-9 bu/A yield advantage. With the corn we saw anywhere between 15-55 bushels with **most of it being 25-30 bushels over the untreated.**"*

- Alan M., Grower | SOUTH DAKOTA, 2025

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¹ <https://cropprotectionnetwork.org/publications/corn-disease-loss-estimates-from-the-united-states-and-ontario-canada-2025>

² <https://www.agweb.com/news/crops/corn/5-critical-insights-southern-rust-rampage-midwest-corn>

³ 2019-2025 On-farm grower/strip trials (n=174). Locations: IA (43), IL (52), IN (16), KS (2), MN (12), MO (4), NE (14), NJ (1), OH (17), WI (13). Application Timing: Miravis Neo and competitors applied: VT-R2 corn.

⁴ 2019-2025 On-farm grower/strip trials (n=82). Locations: AR, IA, IL, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI. Application Timing: Miravis Neo and competitors applied R2 to R4.

⁵ 2018-2025 On-farm grower/strip trials (n=348). Locations: IA, IN, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, NY, OH, PA, SD, VA, WI. Application Rates: Miravis Neo applied VT to R2 at 13.7 fl oz/A.

⁶ 2019-2025 On-farm strip trials (n=256). Locations: AR, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, NY, OH, SD, WI. Application Rates: Miravis Neo applied R2-R4 soybeans at 13.7 fl oz/A.

Product performance assumes disease presence.

Performance assessments are based upon results or analysis of public information, field observations and/or internal Syngenta evaluations.

Trials reflect treatment rates and mixing partners commonly recommended in the marketplace.

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BRENT WARREN



ON THE COVER

Weeds breaking through the crop canopy are no match for the 15,000 volts delivered by The Weed Zapper.

PHOTO BY JASON JENKINS

Alabama farmer leverages storage and time to maximize grain prices and manage risk.

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Farming is a year-round endeavor, and your ATV/UTV plays a crucial role in every season. Whether it's plowing through snow in winter or navigating muddy fields in spring, knowing that your ATV/UTV is protected allows you to concentrate on what matters most—your crops.

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A Hopeful Shade of Green

A heavy rain came through Nashville the night before Easter. Leaves popped from trees with vigor, coloring the world a promising green. My daughter gathered wildflowers, and we debated whether fleabanes count as daisies as we enjoyed our ham.

Spring is a lovely season; there's nothing quite like a fresh start. By now, America's farmers are hard at work, and hopefully you're looking at perfect rows—spring green, evenly emerged and full of hope.

It's not only a pivotal time for production; it's also an important one for the markets. Farmers have two marketing years converging, and they must consider sales for the old-crop corn and soybeans residing in bins, as well as the new crop setting roots. Many savvy hedgers, such as Alabama's Stuart Sanderson, often look ever further ahead and start hedging the next year's crop this time of year. (For more on Sanderson's approach to grain marketing, read "Grain Glut," on page 16).

It's also a good time to make decisions from a historical perspective. Since 1997, the corn market has hit its high in May in 15% of the years, June, 11%, and July, 15%, DTN Lead Analyst Rhet Montgomery explains. The correlation holds for soybeans, too, with the market hitting its high in 18% of the Mays and 11% of the Junes and Julys. The gamble comes in August, when there are plenty of historical accounts of the market hitting its highs but also its lows.

Seasonality is one of the most reliable indicators in an unpredictable market. "You have to be able to lean on something that is predictable historically, and seasonality is the strongest thing we have. I think you have to expect May, June to be the window of opportunity," Montgomery says.

U.S. farmers have more than 5.4 billion bushels of corn stored on the farm, 21% more than last year as of the March 1 "Grain Stocks" report. Part of the reason for the staggering year-over-year growth is that the corn market broke with the seasonal trend. Corn set its high price for the year in February.

Illinois farmer Matt Bennett, who's also CEO and cofounder of marketing advisory firm **AgMarket.Net**, cautions that 2026 is unlikely to be a repeat of 2025.

"I understand that last year is what's most fresh in our memory, but we've got to be really cautious," he says, adding the world and U.S. corn demand is at record levels. "When that's the case, you have the potential that any hiccup in production is going to be magnified. You could have massive volatility hit the market."

If you have unpriced grain in the bin, Montgomery and Bennett both suggest working with your originators. Let them know how much you have to sell, and put some offers in. "We might get pleasantly surprised, and they take us up on it. A lot of farmers got caught with this big crop," Bennett says.

That's why it'll be important to mind your local basis this summer. Any 30- to 50-cent rally in the futures market will pull corn out of the bins. As elevators fill, basis will widen, and prices erode. Navigating the next few months of the market will be tricky, but Bennett—like all farmers faithfully planting each spring—is an optimist.

"We've all been through a rough go, but it's not our first time," he says of the past few seasons. "I think the grower will get through it. Challenging times create a lot of opportunities." ///

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TO MENTION



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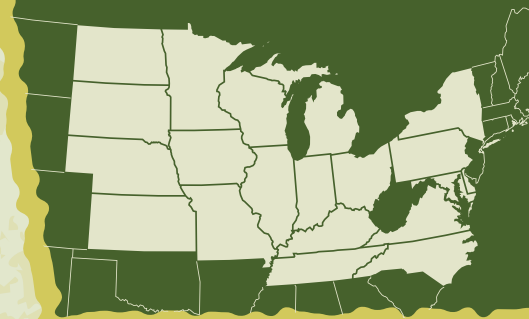
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For farmers who are vertically integrated or who have processing facilities, the qualified production property classification (QPP) is a potential windfall.

Nonagricultural buildings typically have a 39-year life and are not eligible for bonus depreciation. Considering the cost and a 39-year depreciable life, this is not desirable. Along came QPP, which allows certain structures to take bonus depreciation. There was a lack of guidance when QPP was first introduced. However, in February, the IRS released Notice 2006-16, which provided some clarity.

QPP is not for equipment and not all buildings. It is limited to the portion of nonresidential real property that is used by the taxpayer as an integral part of a qualified production activity (QPA), such as manufacturing, chemical/agricultural production or refining that results in a substantial transformation of tangible personal property. Importantly, finished goods storage, office space, administrative areas, lodging, parking, sales, research, software development and engineering functions are explicitly excluded.

The building must be original use and placed in service in the U.S. or U.S. territories. Construction must start after Jan. 19, 2025, and before Jan. 1, 2029. The property must be placed in service after July 4, 2025, and before Jan. 1, 2031. In addition to new construction, modernizing or retooling existing U.S. facilities might qualify for QPP.

The devil is in the details. QPA needs to substantially transform the commodity. That is, the inputs are converted to a new and distinct product. The change must be permanent and can't return to its natural state. The one example cited by the IRS is converting milk to cheese. The IRS says it will issue proposed regulations, which should include more examples.

If you meet the requirements for QPP, you can make an election and take a depreciation deduction for 100% of the adjusted basis for the QPP portion of the property. Additionally, the non-QPP basis must be reduced prior to computing depreciation on that part.

One thing to keep in mind is that if the QPP ceases to be used as part of a qualified production activity or is repurposed for another use within 10 years of being placed in service, it is treated as if the QPP piece was sold, and you will have to pay tax on the depreciation recapture.

As a general rule, property leased to third parties does not qualify, because use by a lessee is not treated as use by the taxpayer for purposes of the integral part requirement. However, the notice provides important exceptions for intercompany leases within a consolidated group and leases between commonly controlled pass-through entities or individuals. The key takeaway is that you should consult your tax professional prior to entering into a lease if there is the potential for QPP.

For agricultural operations that "transform" commodities to products, QPP can be a great tax benefit. However, even if the building doesn't qualify for QPP, keep in mind that a cost-segregation study could also provide tax benefits. ///

TOOLS FROM THE PAST

*No kitchen could be without it.
What is it?*



Answer:

This is a multipurpose device. It's a candle holder (two holes), meat tenderizer (ridged end), stove lid lifter, trivet and a tool to carry various pots and kettles. The large opening allowed space through which to place your hand.



Rod Mauszycki

*Tax Columnist
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► Read Rod's "Ask the Taxman" column at **ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/TAX**

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➤ A recent episode explores how the U.S.-Iran war is adding risk and uncertainty throughout farm country.



From rising oil (diesel) prices, concerns about fertilizer supplies and low commodity prices, farmers and ranchers are facing multiple challenges as they plant the 2026 crop.



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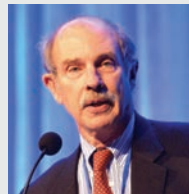
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Embrace Market Technicals To Assess Marketing Decisions

FIRST LOOK INSIDE THE MARKET

An example of volatility, momentum and trend indicators at work recently within the soybean market



When we study commodity markets, there are countless ways to approach the puzzle of prices and put together the pieces into a complete, and hopefully helpful, picture. Over time, these many tips and tools have been sorted into two major categories, which are almost unavoidable when working within the markets: fundamental and technical analysis. Fundamental analysis is an overarching term for the study of supply and demand, of which USDA’s monthly “World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates”

(WASDE) report serves as the centerpiece of most analysis. However, supply and demand only tells part of the story. In fact, since 2010, USDA’s monthly corn ending stocks-to-use ratio only explains

about 65% of the monthly variation in corn prices, and a longer sample size actually decreases the strength of the relationship. The rest of the variation is explained by factors such as expectations for future fundamental shifts, often caused by weather events, and the big one for 2026 thus far: outside market influence, such as surging energy prices following the onset of war in the Middle East in late February.

While many of these market-driving factors are potentially impactful to grains in the long run (think fertilizer price increases because of trade constraints), incorporating technical analysis can offer big hints into how traders are valuing or discounting these issues. Technical analysis, in the simplest terms, is the study of prices themselves and the historical patterns that often repeat. As discussed back in the January “Inside the Market” column, market supply and demand information is quickly absorbed and reflected in prices, and thus, the study

of price action itself is an essential part of a comprehensive assessment of the market in question.

Within the world of technical indicators, there are literally hundreds of choices. However, the toolbox can be simplified by sorting indicators into three broad but crucial groups: momentum, trend and volatility. Below, I give an example or two of my favorites in each of these categories. But, for the sake of this column, I won’t go overly deep into the underlying mathematical calculations, as the recommendations are standard options in most charting software. In my opinion, the following studies are a worthwhile starting point to consider incorporating a technical lens into market analysis and planning.

► **Momentum.** This is usually the shortest time frame measure I use in my daily analysis and essentially gauges the strength of the most recent price movements. For indicators, look first at the Relative Strength Index, the benchmark for momentum-based trading. The tool gives a measure of momentum on a scale of 0 to 100, with areas over 70 being “overbought” potential sale areas, and under 30 being “oversold.”

► **Trend.** The prevailing price direction is set at a longer time frame than momentum, which helps in “smoothing” out the shorter-term fluctuations in price. For indicators, my personal favorite is the Average Directional Index (ADX). Essentially, this tool measures the recent highs and lows relative to price range and assigns a strength rating (0 to 100) to the trend. Note that the ADX is nondirectional, meaning strengthening downtrends still show as upward slopes on the index.

► **Volatility.** This is essentially a measure of risk within the market and how reactive prices have been recently through a set look-back period. Favorites include Bollinger Bands (standard deviations) and Envelopes (fixed-percentage deviations). Price movements above the topside bands are often selling opportunities. ///



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Lead Analyst

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DTNPF.COM/MARKETS

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Over-the-Top Dicamba Is Back in the Toolbox

U.S. cotton and soybean farmers once again have access to dicamba herbicides labeled for postemergence application. EPA announced the two-year registrations for BASF's Engenia, Bayer's Stryax (formerly XtendiMax) and Syngenta's Tavium in early February, calling them "the strongest protections in agency history for 'over-the-top' (OTT) dicamba application on dicamba-tolerant cotton and soybean crops."

WHAT'S NEW

Many requirements for these products will be familiar to farmers and applicators. However, EPA established new limits and restrictions that will affect overall weed-control strategies throughout the growing season:

► **Maximum annual application rate cut in half.** Previous labels allowed up to 2 pounds acid equivalent (a.e.) of dicamba to be sprayed per acre per year. The new maximum is 1 pound a.e. of all dicamba products with no more than 0.5 pound a.e. sprayed per application. The maximum applies to both OTT and non-OTT dicamba products in dicamba-tolerant (DT) cotton and soybeans. This means using dicamba in spring or fall burndown applications could limit or altogether eliminate postemergence use.

► **Temperature-based application limits.** Previous labels restricted OTT dicamba application by calendar date and crop growth stage. The new federal labels use maximum forecast air temperature on the day of and the day after application. When the temperature is forecast to be at or above 95°F, OTT dicamba application is prohibited. When the temperature is forecast to be between 85 and 95°F, farmers may only treat 50% of their DT cotton and soybean acres in a county. The remaining acres may not be treated until at least two days after the initial application.

► **Volatility reduction agents doubled.** Every OTT dicamba application must include 40 ounces per acre of an approved volatility reduction agent (VRA). Previous labels only required 20 ounces. EPA claims this will

significantly reduce the likelihood that dicamba will turn into vapor and drift off target after application. OTT dicamba applications must also include a drift reduction agent (DRA) mixed at a concentration of 0.3% volume-to-volume of the final tank volume.

► **Mitigation Points Requirement to Protect Endangered Species.** To ensure herbicide registration complies with the Endangered Species Act, EPA requires farmers earn runoff/erosion mitigation points on each treated field from a menu of conservation practices. For OTT dicamba products, farmers must achieve three points in most cases. Within Pesticide Use Limitation Areas (PULAs), six points are required.

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Technology

STATE-SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS

Five states—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota—have further restricted use of OTT dicamba in 2026 and 2027. These states have instituted application cutoffs by calendar date, crop growth stage or both. Illinois and Minnesota also prohibit application when the temperature exceeds 85°F.

LEGACY RESTRICTIONS

Beyond the new restrictions, the labels for Engenia, Stryax and Tavium carry more than a dozen legacy restrictions from previous registrations. OTT dicamba products maintain status as restricted use, meaning only certified applicators who complete specific annual training may spray them. The labels also dictate droplet size, boom height, wind speed requirements, tank-mixing prohibitions, spray drift buffers, application-timing restrictions and more.

When announcing that OTT dicamba was back for 2026 and 2027, EPA stated that the agency will "not hesitate to adjust restrictions or revoke approvals quickly if new information emerges showing risks are not being adequately controlled." Spraying season will tell the tale.

For more information, visit the EPA's "Registration of Dicamba for Use on Dicamba-Tolerant Crops" site at <https://tinyurl.com/5n93738h> ///

A Helping of Goodness For Mother's Day

BY Katie Pratt

Every year as Mother's Day approaches, my kids ask the same question: "Mom, what do you want for Mother's Day?"

My response is the same one my mom gave my siblings and me, and possibly the same one her mother gave her.

"Good kids."

This wish almost always elicits an eye roll and groan. When they were little, my kids claimed this was too hard to give as a gift. Upon reflection, I'm not sure how many times my



KATIE PRATT

siblings and I succeeded in delivering on my mom's request.

Instead, we typically spent Mother's

Day helping prepare the garden for planting, picking up sticks fallen in spring storms or clearing brush and dead trees in the pasture. At some point, we'd wander through a wildflower patch that sprang from the banks of the creek. Those blooms were so tiny and delicate, yet we managed to collect fistfuls accented with a few lavender-colored violets. My mom would pop those into a wide, shallow vase and display that bouquet as if it was the finest she had ever received.

These days, my Mother's Day may also involve a gathered floral arrangement, along with help planting porch pots and hanging baskets. My gift is the extra muscle power to lift bags of potting soil and arrange full pots.

On the farm, this "holiday" may not look different from other days, but as a "farm mom" by choice, I relish the break from the spring rush.

The day usually ends with a potluck gathered around a campfire if weather cooperates. Mother's Day for our family is less about gifts and more about time spent with the people who mean the most. Toss in burgers grilled over hot coals, simple salads and sticky, gooey s'mores for dessert, and suddenly, everything about this day feels good. ///



Katie Pratt writes and shares her love of agriculture and family with others from a north-central Illinois farm. Find her writing blog at <https://theillinoisfarmgirl.com>

Tips To Cure Auction Angst

BY Tiffany Dowell Lashmet

Our family recently survived show animal-shopping season.

It's a time of both stress and excitement as we head to the auction ring to invest in next year's projects.

Here are a few things we've learned from the experience:

1 Keep your hands down. It is a right of passage for every ag kid to go to a sale and have an adult remind them they can inadvertently buy something or scare them into thinking it happened.

2 Have a budget. It is easy to get caught up in the excitement of an auction, especially if you are competitive and view winning the bid as a victory. There is nothing wrong with making a smart financial decision that may result in losing a bid. It is not a fun lesson to learn but maybe one of the most important.

3 Selection criteria can differ drastically between buyers. At a recent show steer sale, I was focused on finding calves with good structure. Meanwhile, my 9-year-old daughter made her list based solely on which calves would let her walk up and pet them while loose in the pen.

4 Put human eyes on the live animal. I know this observation makes me seem old and antitechnology. But, I still believe in having myself or someone I trust look at the animal before spending thousands of dollars. Doing so has paid off numerous times.

5 Get the kids involved. If we want kids to be brought into these livestock projects (and, more importantly, this way of life), we must get them involved. Let them sort through and make a list of what they like about an animal. Ask them to explain what they see in that selection. Let them flip through the breed book and choose what bull to breed to. Give them the buyer's number, and let them do the bidding—as long as you've also taught them rule No. 1! ///



COURTESY OF TIFFANY DOWELL LASHMET



Tiffany Dowell Lashmet juggles family, farming, writing, livestock and a career in ag law from the Texas Panhandle. Follow her on Instagram [alwaysafarmkid](https://www.instagram.com/alwaysafarmkid), on social platform X [@TiffDowell](https://twitter.com/TiffDowell) and on her blog at <https://alwaysafarmkid.com>



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JOEL REICHENBERGER

Wilson and his wife, Tammy, renovated a long-abandoned and overgrown 75-acre farm between Louisville and Lexington after purchasing the property in 1999. He spent hours with a bulldozer and track hoe clearing 45 acres of a jungle of hedge apples, cedars and thorn trees as a base for a small cow herd. He left 30 acres of forest intact along with 300-foot wooded buffers between pastures and creeks to prevent soil erosion and improve water quality.

After the land preparation, the Wilsons reestablished a mix of forages, including fescue, orchardgrass and red and white clover. Over the years, he also added Timothy and gamagrass to the mix.

To make efficient use of the newly established pastures, the couple began a rotational-grazing system to prevent overgrazing and to provide at least a monthlong rest period for the forage to regrow between visits from the cow herd.

Wilson uses adaptive-grazing techniques based on paddocks ranging from 2 to 8 acres each. Paddocks on his owned land are plumbed for city water. Three paddocks on leased ground have surface water available.

The Wilsons have expanded the farm to 197 acres and lease another 60 acres to support an endophyte-free fescue hay operation and warm-season grazing. Their herd is now mainly Simmental-Angus that produces freezer beef, bred heifers and commercial cattle for the sale barn.

The couple's conservation ethic and efforts were recognized in 2024 with the state's Leopold Conservation Award for environmental improvement and inspiration to others to follow good land stewardship. In 2025, they received a Region 1 National Cattlemen's Beef Association Environmental

Winter Bale-Grazing BELIEVER

Skeptical producer is now an advocate of the advantages the concentrated feeding practice provides his cattle and pastures.

Though skeptical at first, Mike Wilson has readily adopted winter bale grazing for his 30-head commercial cow herd at Whispering Hills Farm, in northern Kentucky.

"I basically told them they were crazy when University of Kentucky (UK) educators began talking about using bale grazing around here," Wilson explains. "I told them it might work up north where the ground is frozen during the winter or out west where it's dry. However, with the rains we get, I figured concentrating cattle around bales in wet conditions would just tear up our pastures."

> PASSIONATE ABOUT PASTURE RESTORATION

Wilson's pastures are dear to his heart, and the thought of damaging them after he'd worked years to restore them from nothing sent up plenty of red flags.



MIKE WILSON



JOEL REICHENBERGER

Stewardship Award for long-term conservation management.

Thanks to their restoration and grazing efforts, the Wilsons have seen an explosion of deer and wild turkey numbers on their farm. It has also become a popular stop for numerous field days and workshops conducted by United Kingdom (UK) scientists and various conservation organizations.

> BALE-GRAZING SKEPTIC

Naturally, when the mention of concentrating cattle around lines of big round bales of hay during wet winter months was discussed, Wilson pushed back—hard. Little wonder since he had worked so diligently to protect his thin soils and 100-acres of productive paddocks and adjacent hay ground.

Bale grazing involves leaving big round bales in the field where they are harvested or hauling bales to a certain pasture to set out in rows for strip-grazing in the winter. Studies show the practice—allowing cattle access to the bales in easy-to-move electrified Polywire “subpaddocks”—can be more cost-effective than hauling hay to cattle daily in winter conditions. Since

□ *Mike Wilson's worries about pasture damage disappeared once he saw the benefits of bale grazing.*

the cattle eagerly consume their spoon-fed forage, researchers say the practice keeps hay waste to a minimum.

“A couple of my friends also thought the concept was flawed for our geography and climate, but they tried it, and I saw how it worked for them,” Wilson explains. “I started out eight years ago in a test with

the UK scientists on a 10-acre strip and was really surprised. Sure enough, it looked like there was a lot of damage around the bales, but it recovered very quickly. Also, some of the gamagrass I’d sown and watched disappear was really coming back, apparently from severe hoof action.”

In addition to fuel and time savings over daily hay hauling, North Dakota State University studies show a 50% increase in forage production the following growing season in the 15-foot radius of the bale’s center. Also, forage quality in that 30-foot circle nearly doubled (9.5% to nearly 16%) in crude protein compared with control areas in the same field.

The second summer after bale grazing in the university studies saw an increase in forage production from 30 to 80% in the 30-foot circle surrounding the grazed bale. Scientists say the improvements are >



MIKE WILSON

traced to manure and urine deposited in the circle, and the grass picking it up rather than it entering the soil profile and deposited downslope. The results also showed a four times increase in soil nitrogen in the bale-grazed circles.

While he doesn't have the actual soil test results from the ongoing UK study, Wilson says he sees ample evidence the practice is building the pastures' fertility and water-holding capacity.

"After that first year, it appeared as if I'd put down 100 pounds of nitrogen around those bales," he recalls. "Also, where cattle have concentrated in wet weather around feeding areas or water, it usually takes a couple of years to recover from all their tromping around in the mud.

"On the two fields we bale-grazed at first, that following year, they were some of the first to green up with lush growth," Wilson continues. "And, in areas where we'd been hit with drought several years ago, I noticed the areas where we'd bale-grazed were the last to dry out. It's like a compost with organic matter that holds moisture."

Now a believer, Wilson rotates the fields in which he uses the bale-grazing practice across his warm-season paddocks. In three or four years, he'll be back on the original field. To more evenly distribute the benefits of the concentrated feeding events, he consciously alters the position of bales from where the first set of bales sat.

Polywire paddocks limit feeding areas around bales while also keeping labor requirements to a minimum.

"We don't bale-graze our hay meadows, which are across a county line and lack water and crossfencing, but elsewhere it's regularly used throughout cold weather," Wilson explains.

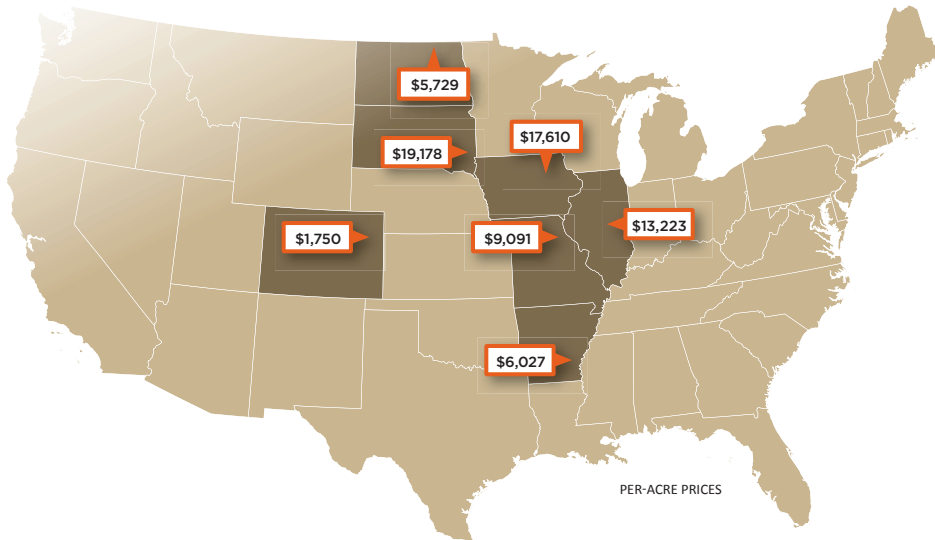
"Sometimes, when the ground is frozen and snow covered, or if we've had a spell of dry weather, I like to roll out the bales to provide for some bedding as well as forage," he adds. "Otherwise, our bales are fed in rings to concentrate soil nutrients for the following season."

Initially, Wilson's trials began with bales set on quarter-acre enclosures, but he and the UK researchers quickly realized the paddocks were too small, and too much "hoof action" was taking place.

"We took that to one-half acre, and that is just about right," he explains. "I try to set enough bales out for three to four weeks' grazing, then restock the next line when I get a break in the weather. I don't want to stock all the bale-grazing strips and just have that quality hay sitting out in the rain and weather for months."

Wilson says the improvements he's seen in his pastures over eight years of bale-grazing have been impressive. He adds because the couple is the farm's only labor to manage 30 head of cows and their calves, the easy-to-manage Polywire paddocks for winter hay grazing conveniently complement his low-labor, warm-season adaptive grazing of growing pastures. ///

Recent Farmland Sales



ARKANSAS, Lincoln County. A 1,344-acre farm sold for \$8.1 million, or \$6,027 per acre. The irrigated farmland includes 1,154 acres of tillable ground and 10 wells. The farm features a soil NCCPI rating of 77.6 with a variety of silt loam soils that allow for a diverse array of crops, including cotton, corn, soybeans and rice. **Contact:** Joel King, Peoples Co. Integrated Land Solutions; joel@peoplescompany.com, 870-817-0945; or George Baird, Peoples Co.; gbaird@landmarkag.net, 901-483-0373 <https://peoplescompany.com>

COLORADO, Yuma County. A 315-acre farm sold at auction for \$551,250, or \$1,750 per acre. The land includes 80 acres of growing wheat and 323 acres of clean wheat stubble ready for spring planting. The ground is described as nearly level to gently rolling. **Contact:** Cory Busse, Absolute Land Auction; cdbusse12@gmail.com, 785-332-8345 <https://www.frmail.com>

ILLINOIS, Christian County. A 605-acre farm sold in nine separate tracts at auction for \$8 million, or an average of \$13,223 per acre. Tract 1, which includes 76 cropland acres with a Soil Productivity Index of 133.4 and a shed, sold for a high of \$20,500 per acre. A

124-acre tract including a two-story farmhouse, four grain bins and a large pole shed sold for \$12,400 per acre. The tract includes 11 timber acres considered to be ideal for recreational opportunities. **Contact:** Rodney Borrowman, Sullivan Auctioneers; sold@sullivanauctioneers.com, 630-247-0667; or John Borrowman, Sullivan Auctioneers; sold@sullivanauctioneers.com, 217-430-0645 <https://www.sullivanauctioneers.com>

IOWA, Floyd County. A 159-acre farm sold at auction for \$2.8 million, or \$17,610 per acre. The property was sold to one buyer in two contiguous tracts that include 102 corn base acres with a Price Loss Coverage (PLC) yield of 165 bushels per acre. The farm also includes 57 soybean base acres with a PLC yield of 47 bushels per acre. **Contact:** Frank A. Fox, Fox Auction Co.; frank@foxauctioncompany.com, 641-420-3243 <https://foxauctioncompany.com/current-auctions/>

MISSOURI, Shelby County. A 253-acre farm sold at auction in four tracts for \$2.3 million, or an average of \$9,091 per acre. The property includes a 99-acre tract that sold for \$1.1 million and consists of 78 acres in row-

crop production and 5 acres in hay production. A 60-acre tract that sold for \$11,000 an acre includes 45 open acres currently in grass and brushy draws being used as cattle pasture. **Contact:** Scott Gander, Peoples Land Co. LLC; scottgander@hotmail.com, 660-676-1479; Anthony Peoples, anthony@peopleslandco.com, 660-651-6501 <https://peoplescompany.com>

NORTH DAKOTA, Cavalier County. A 192-acre farm sold at auction in four tracts for \$1.1 million, or an average of \$5,729 per acre. The tracts consist mainly of recreational and cropland acres. A 39-acre tract has the best soil rating of the four tracts, at 40.6, and is 47% tillable, selling for \$214,555, or \$5,500 per acre. A 75-acre purely recreational track of land sold for \$414,872, or \$5,525 per acre, and features a population of deer and elk. **Contact:** Max Steffes, Steffes Group; max.steffes@steffesgroup.com, 701-237-9173; Joel Swanson, Steffes Group; joel.swanson@SteffesGroup.com, 701-371-7152 <https://steffesgroup.com>

SOUTH DAKOTA, Moody County. A 146-acre farm sold at auction for \$2.8 million, or \$19,178 per acre. The property includes 72 corn base acres with a PLC yield of 154 bushels per acre, as well as 72 soybean base acres with a PLC yield of 47 bushels. The farm's soils have an overall Soil Productivity Index of 90.4%. **Contact:** Jackson Hegerfeld, Advantage Land Co.; info@advantagelandco.com, 605-692-2525 <https://www.advantagelandco.com>

These sales figures are provided by the sources and may not be exact because of rounding.

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www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/magazine/your-land



Grain Glut

➤ By **Katie Dehlinger**, @KatieD_DTN
Photos By **Brent Warren**

This Alabama farmer leverages on-farm storage and futures markets to manage risk and build working capital.

Stuart Sanderson sells more than a million bushels of corn, soybeans and wheat each year. With that much of his fifth-generation family farm’s production on the line, he’s well-versed at managing the risks associated with a glut of grain.

“It all circles back to profitability,” says the Alabama farmer, who runs 9,000-acre Henderson Farms with his uncle and cousin, Mike and Chad Henderson. Between the volume the farm grows and the ability to store it, Sanderson operates more like a commercial grain elevator: hedging with futures, capitalizing on basis and capturing the carry.

Farmers are good at planting, growing and harvesting crops, he says. “What farmers are not as good at doing is determining what they want that crop to do for them.”

It shows. Four years of big crops, compressed profit margins and eroding working capital have created one of the toughest farm business environments since the 1980s. Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings rose 46% in 2025 from the year before, and anecdotal reports of farmers shaving off acreage or quitting the business abound.



Sanderson can attest: His farm picked up acreage this winter after a nearby farm went out of business. He credits Henderson Farms’ approach to marketing and financial management for growing the farm’s balance sheet and reputation—not only for sound business management but also high-quality grain production—and creating growth opportunities.

Marketing is about reliably capturing profitability, he says, not catching the high. His advice for other farmers ranges from basic to advanced, but the bottom line is the same: Marketing is not speculation, it’s what keeps the farm in business.

> CHANGE TAKES TIME

Sanderson pursued a degree in business and marketing in college with the understanding that there wasn't room for him in the operation. That plan changed when his grandfather retired, and he assumed management of the farm's business, marketing and finances.

In his early years, the farm made a strategic pivot, reducing cotton acreage and expanding grain production, which necessitated a change in how the farm sold its output. Previously, cotton sales were managed by a broker, while the small amount of grain the farm grew each year was sold over the scales at harvest into the seasonal glut and often at marketing year lows.

"It made me branch out a little further into more hedging," he says. Sanderson started small. He'd sell enough grain ahead of harvest to cover 25 to 100% of the farm's input costs, confident that crop insurance would cover the position if he couldn't deliver the bushels.

In 2007, Sanderson and his partners decided their 8,000-bushel bin and batch flow dryer wasn't enough. They built a new setup: a 20,000-bushel wet bin with continuous flow dryer and two 60,000-bushel grain bins.

"People really thought we'd lost our minds," he says. "Outside of a co-op, there was nothing like that in this area."

Drought meant Henderson Farms didn't put a bushel of its own grain into the bin that year, but it did buy 20,000 bushels of corn from a neighbor. The market rallied, and "we made \$1.95 per bushel on that corn," Sanderson explains.

He knew they were on to something, and over the years, the farm added to its storage capacity. It can now store 600,000 bushels in bins and a flexible amount in grain bags, if needed.

> MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Sanderson and his marketing adviser, John Pfanner, make a plan each year. Pfanner is a commodity broker and crop insurance agent at advisory firm Tredas, and a former grain merchandiser and a Missouri farm kid. But, before the two determine details of how to sell the farm's output, Sanderson and his cousin, who manages the farm's production, create a budget based on what they need to grow it.

"You need to know your cost of production for a bushel of grain," he says. Then, he stresses that it's important to determine your goals above and beyond simply staying in business. For his farm, it's about building working capital, but for others it may be

paying down debt or prepaying inputs in the fall with cash, for example.

Once you know what you need that bushel to do, Sanderson suggests setting up a white board for each crop you grow. Put it in the office or wherever you will look at it every day.

"Put some target prices up there. Put your pie-in-the-sky prices up there. Put a few historical prices up there. Figure out what it is you want that bushel of grain to do for you," he says.



Stuart Sanderson manages grain sales for his family's fifth-generation farm in Madison, Alabama.

> AVOID THE TRAPS

Once you know your price targets, stick to them. Sanderson says farmers often get caught in a trap: As commodity prices move higher, so do farmers' price targets. Then, the market reverses, and those farmers missed an opportunity

for profitable sales.

"Quit chasing dollars, and start looking at the cents," he says. When the market hits his target price and looks set to keep rallying, Sanderson makes incremental sales regularly until the market changes direction. "With as much grain as we grow on our farm, I do a lot of 5,000-bushel increments," he says. While he has sold as much as 50,000 bushels at once, he prefers to build his price over time.

Pfanner advises several smaller farms that follow a similar feed-the-rally strategy, but they use mini-futures contracts, which cover 1,000 bushels instead of 5,000, like a standard contract.

Sanderson is very realistic about prices, Pfanner says. "He's never backwards critical. When the decision is made, it's made because it was a good decision that day, and then we move on to the next decision." ▶

Sanderson doesn't let past success influence current choices. For example, he once sold 125,000 bushels of corn for an average price of \$8.45, but that had no influence on his decision to hedge a portion of this year's corn crop at \$4.70 in mid-March, nearly 45% less than his best-ever sale.

"Why? Because I can make money. I can stay in business," he says. "Corn at \$4.50 to \$5 is a lot more realistic than even \$6. Forget the highs, but always remember how low something can go."

> **CAPTURE THE CARRY, MAXIMIZE BASIS**

Sanderson doesn't plan on selling the corn he hedged with a \$4.70 December futures contract at harvest. He'll likely take advantage of the futures spread—the price difference between nearby and later-dated futures contracts—and roll the position into May. In a carry market where there is plenty of inventory, later-dated futures contracts have a higher price, and rolling the hedge often nets an additional 15 to 18 cents on average, Pfanner says.

In years like this one, "If you can capture 20 cents, that might be what keeps you in the black and not the red," Sanderson explains.

Another way Sanderson optimizes his marketing is by separating his futures market decisions from his basis decisions. Basis is the difference between the futures price and the cash price received by the farmer. Basis can be positive or negative depending on factors like local supply and demand as well as transportation costs.

Pfanner says basis tends to appreciate after harvest, as elevators work to source bushels to fulfill their deals with end users.

A plethora of poultry production nearby means Sanderson lives in a grain-deficit area and usually deals with a positive basis, but he says farmers in heavily supplied markets that regularly manage a negative basis have opportunities, too.



He recalls putting this concept to work in a conversation with a friend last November. His friend had 100,000 bushels of soybeans in the bin, and prices were dropping. His friend was considering hauling them to town, but the local basis was 30 cents under futures. Sanderson encouraged his friend to call the elevator and ask what they'd pay for a delivery in late January or February. As it turned out, the elevator was offering 35 cents over the futures market in that time frame.

"Right there, he made 65 cents on 100,000 bushels of beans, not to mention there was a 20-cent difference in the futures market. So, he just made \$85,000 by sitting



on his beans for two months,” Sanderson says. “That’s the advantage of marketing. It broadens your ability to capture the basis, the market gains and the carries. It gives you options.”

> PUT SEASONALITY TO WORK

Sanderson says many of his best sales are made far outside of the harvest window. Generally, he finds prices he likes in the springtime.



Pfanner says there’s a seasonality to every commodity, and statistically, the best time for preharvest corn and soybean marketing with futures is February to June.

Sanderson often takes seasonal trading a step further. In the spring, he’ll start looking 18 months down the road. “Some of my highest hedges are preharvest of the previous crop,” he says.

For example, on May 11, 2024, he sold November 2025 soybean futures at \$12.90. The contract expired at \$11.38, although it traded as low as \$9.61 per bushel.

Farmers often worry about two things hedging that far out: Will they be able to produce the crop, and can they manage margin calls? A margin call occurs when the market moves against your futures position, and your account equity drops below the required maintenance level, requiring you to deposit additional funds to maintain the position.

> BROKER BENEFITS

“Margin call is not a dirty word,” Sanderson says. “Because I’m not margining something I don’t have. I have equity in my grain.” In a true hedging situation, a paper loss means that the physical grain has appreciated in value, he explains.

While Henderson Farms eschews debt and funds margin calls with working capital reserves, many banks will offer farmers a separate line of credit specifically to manage margin calls, alleviating fears

of a capital draw when the farm needs money to pay other bills.

Pfanner says the interest expense on an operating line often works out to be less than the fee an elevator would charge on a hedge-to-arrive contract (HTA). For a Dec. 26 HTA, elevators usually charge 4 to 5 cents per bushel because they assume the margin risk. If you sold the same futures contract on the board, and it went up \$1, the cost of interest on your margin call might only be 1.5 to 2 cents, he says.

“Margin calls are not a sign of success or failure. They’re just part of business, like spending money on fertilizer or seed,” Pfanner says. If farmers are truly hedging, not speculating or spending all their money on options, they want a negative brokerage account balance because it means their physical grain carries a higher price.

Pfanner says many of his clients had big brokerage account losses in 2021 and 2022 as the market ran up, but “after taking out brokerage account losses, they had the highest bottom lines they’d ever had in their life.” That’s because their preharvest marketing helped them optimize their basis and pick up the carry.

Sanderson advises farmers to thoroughly vet their broker. Look for someone who understands row-crop production and examine their fee structure. “You don’t want someone who is worried about making a commission every day, because they’re not going to have your best interest in mind,” he says.

> GRAIN MARKETING IS BRAND MARKETING

Over the years, Sanderson has watched Henderson Farms’ philosophies on risk and financial management translate into strong brand marketing. Storage not only supports his grain marketing strategies, it also keeps the grain in top condition, allowing the farm to sell directly to end users like poultry companies, dog food processors and a high-end miller.

Many of these buyers pick up grain from his farm, paying him a positive basis and saving him the transportation costs.

“I’m a go-to person when these places need corn. We created that brand, and that’s all due to the [grain] marketing aspect,” he says. “Marketing gives you so many opportunities to expand your operation and to increase your income. Marketing is not just the dollars and cents of your operation.”

Sanderson understands that not all farms have his level of production or storage capacity, but stresses that everything is a ratio.

“Your philosophy still needs to stay the same: You need to have an understanding of what you want that bushel of grain to do for you and how you want it to work for your benefit.” ///

AUTONOMY

Takes Root

Few farms are actually planting this spring's crop autonomously. Here's one that is.

onto mainly utility-sized tractors, including more than 20 working at King Ranch, in Texas.

Sabanto's kit includes antennas, a dual GNSS receiver, obstacle-detection sensors and video cameras. Object-detection sensors are mounted on the cab and front of the tractor. The tractor's vehicle path-finding module converts operator instructions into tractor performance. The tractor product retails for \$70,000.

> MORE HOURS, SMALLER EQUIPMENT

Sabanto CEO Craig Rupp sees the future in Pottinger's work. "I'm convinced that the future is smaller swarms of equipment," Rupp says. "Autonomy will bring horsepower in the other direction, with longer hours of operation and less-expensive equipment."

Panorama is not purpose-built for autonomy. But, for Pottinger, Panorama's live-streaming feature is a critical piece of his plans.

"We can see exactly what the monitor displays and make changes remotely, as we would on the monitor in the tractor," he explains. "Seed rate and placement, depth, ground contact—imagine everything you look at while you are planting, that is what you see remotely in real time, and you can make adjustments."

Panorama gives managers remote vision. "Because the whole point of autonomy is that you don't want to have to babysit it. Panorama gives the manager confidence that the machine will tell you when something is going on," says Bryce Baker, North American tactical marketing, Precision Planting.



Quint Pottinger

Quint Pottinger kicked off his first days of spring fine-tuning the equipment he'll use to plant his 2026 corn and soybean crops—only this year, the tractor driver's seat will be empty. Pottinger's newly acquired 6130E John Deere tractor paired with a Deere 1745 lift-and-twist planter will do the work on its own autonomously.

Historically, it has taken Pottinger 23 days with a pair of 16-row planters to seed his New Haven, Kentucky, corn and soybean crops. This year, he's anticipating his crop will be planted in 19 planting days.

"My plan is to let this thing go and ideally only check on it every six hours. We should be able to finish in 19 planting days," Pottinger says.

His planter is a JD 1745 eight-row (8/15) planter. He has control of it by way of Precision Planting's Gen3 20i20 monitor and Panorama technology. Pottinger is able to log in and view and make planting changes remotely.

Spring 2026 is actually "autonomous season" No. 2 for Pottinger. Last fall, he employed a 15-foot JD 750 seed drill, also powered by Precision Planting, to autonomously plant winter wheat, cereal rye and barley. "We planted 500 acres using Panorama, Sabanto and Starlink," Pottinger says.

Precision Planting's Gen 3 20i20 monitor visualizes performance and field conditions in real time. Panorama displays maps, input summaries and agronomic data on smartphones, computers or other platforms.

Ames, Iowa-based Sabanto Inc.'s autonomous guidance package controls Pottinger's tractor. Sabanto-equipped tractors already perform tillage and seeding—even mowing sod farms.

Sabanto counts clients in Australia, Canada and the U.S. It supports between 200 and 300 systems installed

Pottinger's goal is not to run his tractor and planter around the clock.

"The goal is to take advantage of planting windows," he says. "If that means starting at 2 a.m. and stopping at noon, so be it. In central Kentucky, those windows are drastically different day-to-day."

> LESSONS ABOUT LOGISTICS

Pottinger learned a valuable lesson from last fall's autonomous work. "It seems obvious now, but when we started, it was, 'Let's get this thing running and address fuel, seed and maintenance, as needed,'" he says. But, that was practice full of inefficiencies. So, Pottinger adjusted. He began setting acre limits to match seed and fuel fill-ups along with general machine checkups.

Pottinger's corn planter is outfitted with RowCommand row clutches to prevent overplanting and reduce overlaps. He has opted for pneumatic downforce (air bags) on the row units.

"We have issues with rocks that break the double disc openers. The airbags are more forgiving than hydraulic cylinders for downforce," Pottinger says.

He plans to plant slowly. "Instead of planting 5½ miles an hour, we'll be planting 3 miles an hour, which, with the airbags, should give us consistent depth."

Starlink is a key piece of the technology suite. "Precision Planting's 20120 monitor needs uninterrupted internet connectivity to remote in," Pottinger adds. Starlink also provides a fail-safe for Sabanto automation.

His farm workday remains like any other, except now his planting day may be 16 hours. That changes labor deployment. Pottinger pays two employees. He, and they, will work differently with a remote, autonomous planting function in play.

> AUTONOMOUS CHECK-INS

"Everybody will have a check-in," Pottinger says. "Depending on where the planter is running, whoever's coming in from that direction in the morning, they'll check the planter, put fuel in the tractor."

At noon, Pottinger does a check. At the end of the human workday, the person closest to the tractor will do the evening check. "And, I'll do a final check from home around 11 o'clock," he says. "If I know it



The cab roof (left) holds antennas, a GNSS receiver, cameras, radar and Starlink. An infrared detector (top) is on the left front of the tractor, and an infrared emitter is on the right. A close-up of the infrared detector (middle). The Sabanto switch box (bottom) controls autonomy on or off.

can't make it through the night, then I'll send an adjustment to have it go to the seed tender when it gets low on seed."

Once it's refueled and hoppers refilled in the morning, tractor and planter return to where they left off.

> CUTTING ROAD TIME

The lay of the land is an important autonomous consideration. It is a plus to be able to move from field to field by remote command using internal roads. Moving autonomously on public roads is illegal.

Pottinger made some adjustments to optimize travel between fields.

"We can work across fields without having to go onto public roads," he says. "We have to get on roads to move only three or four times."

Autonomous farming is not something that has simply triggered Pottinger's inner geek. It is a critical piece giving his farm's economic vitality that required difficult decisions about equipment. He sold a pair of 40-foot planters, two large frame tractors and, unexpectedly, a combine and two headers.

With harvest of double-crop soybeans and autonomous fall planting, "We found a point where we could get one crop out and another crop in," he says. "This is the labor story of automation. With the one tractor running remotely, we gained two guys—a seed runner and tractor operator—back to support the harvest. We realized we didn't need the extra combine to get the crop in."

The equipment swaps makes economic sense. With his old equipment lineup, he figures it cost \$2,800 per hour to keep the 16-row planters in the field, including the costs for seed, fuel, labor, equipment, etc.

Running his 2019 6130E tractor plus automation (cost \$190,000) with the 2022 8-row planter (\$90,000) for an average of 16 hours per day over 19 days (assuming 7 acres per hour and 314 hours total), Pottinger estimates his per-hour planting costs are now \$828.

"If we can automate sections of the farm with smaller pieces of equipment, then we can eliminate this need to maintain a larger equipment fleet without decreasing acres," he says. "Our goal is to try to return almost a half a million dollars back to the farming operation in equipment sales." ///

AMPED UP Weed Control

Electric solution sparks a growing family business for Missouri farmers.

The sounds “snap, crackle, pop” may be most associated with breakfast cereal, but on a mid-September afternoon in west-central Missouri, it was weeds in a soybean field that were getting crispy. The marestail snapped, the cockleburs crackled and the pigweeds popped as Ben Kroeger delivered 15,000 volts of weed-killing current to those that dared to rise above the crop canopy.

Kroeger is co-owner of Old School Manufacturing, makers of The Weed Zapper brand of electrical weeders. While using electricity to kill weeds isn’t a new concept, and other companies around the world sell similar machines (see “Electrocution Solutions,” on page 26), what makes The Weed Zapper unique

is that it was developed by Missouri farmers whose own search for a weed-control solution sparked the growing family business.

> FROM HOGS TO HIGH VOLTAGE

Generations of the Kroeger family have been involved in farming. Ben’s grandfather, Sonny, was a row-crop farmer and pork producer for more than 50 years. His father, Tony, also had a farrow-to-finish hog operation



but eventually left agriculture behind after starting a commercial heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) business in the late 1980s.

Ben and his brother, Mike, joined their father's HVAC and electrical company in 2007, but they also farmed about 300 certified organic acres together on the side.

"When you're certified organic, it's not a matter of if you'll have weed trouble. It's a matter of when," Ben says. "We were looking for new solutions. Then around 2016, Mike came across an article talking about how the railroads tried electricity back in the late 1800s to keep their tracks clear. We said to ourselves, 'Hey, we know a little about electricity and a little about farming. Let's see if we can put both of them together and learn something.'"

As the Kroegers started building their own electric weeder, they discovered that another farming family in Illinois had already started down that road. So, rather than recreate the proverbial wheel, Ben says they called and inquired about buying a unit.

"They told us they'd never actually sold one. They just had a prototype, and it wasn't for sale," he recalls. "That was kind of the end of the phone conversation."

Two days later, however, Ben's phone rang. The narrative had changed.

"They had a patent pending and said they were willing to sell us the prototype if we bought the whole business," he says. "Three weeks later, we were in Illinois bringing that machine home."

The Kroegers established Old School Manufacturing in 2017 and sold the first Weed Zapper in 2018. In the years since, they've sold nearly 700 units in the United States, as well as Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Romania.

> WEED-WHACKING WATTS

The original Weed Zapper, which the Kroegers dubbed the Annihilator Series, consists of an electrode boom and tractor-mounted cart containing a generator and transformer. The tractor's PTO spins the generator to create electricity, which is then stepped up through the transformer and fed as a positive charge to the electrode boom.

Ben Kroeger electrocutes weeds in a west-central Missouri soybean field using a Weed Zapper Terminator Series equipped with the company's new Scratch Pad Applicator.

Coulters contact the soil and ground the machine. When the electrode touches a weed, it completes a circuit, sending as many as 15,000 volts through the plant—enough energy to power five or six all-electric homes. The electricity causes moisture in the weed to expand, >





- ◀ *Nearly a decade after the Kroegers purchased the first Weed Zapper prototype and began their business, the original machine is still killing weeds.*
- ▼ *The Weed Zapper Terminator Series Digital Cultivator can kill weeds between the rows and below the crop canopy.*

rupturing cell walls and leading to plant death.

The Weed Zapper Terminator Series is the company's self-propelled line of high-clearance machines that allow for later-season weed control. They operate with the same principles for electrocuting weeds, but the system has a dedicated engine for producing power. All Weed Zappers are equipped with redundant systems to ensure safe operation.

The system is nonselective, which means that if it touches a plant—whether it be a weed or the cash crop—it can deliver a lethal dose of electricity. Ben says they suggest running the boom about 3 inches above the crop. While operating at that height won't contact every weed, research has found the system to be highly effective at killing the

Brothers Ben (left) and Mike Kroeger handle most of the research and development for the family's Weed Zapper line of electrical weeders.

weeds that it does touch. Weed scientists at the University



of Missouri found that The Weed Zapper provided greater than 95% control of weed species such as waterhemp, marehail, common ragweed and giant ragweed in soybeans when the weeds were above the crop canopy. They also found that electrocution decreased weed seed viability by 54 to 80%, depending on the species, reducing the number of future weeds from sprouting from the seed bank.

Farmers who've used the machines offer similar success stories. Jim Jacobs operates Thistledown Farms, a 350-acre operation raising certified organic corn, soybeans, wheat and sunflowers near Napoleon, Ohio. He purchased a Terminator Series Weed Zapper four seasons ago and shared his experiences with the machine during a webinar hosted by the scientist-led GROW (Getting Rid of Weeds) network in 2025.

"The three weeds I battle consistently are common foxtail, Canada thistle and giant ragweed," Jacobs says. "It's hard to even imagine or comprehend unless you've seen it in person, but if you make one pass through the field, through the giant ragweed, by the time you turn around and start heading back the other direction, those ragweeds are already doubled over and starting to die."

Aaron Cooper, of Cutfresh Organics, in Eden, Maryland, also participated in the GROW webinar. He runs an Annihilator Series Weed Zapper on his 450-acre farm, where he grows



certified organic corn, soybean, barley, sorghum and fresh market green beans. He says they were struggling with increased weed pressure and bought the electrical weeder to turn the tide.

“It was just one more tool in the toolbox to increase our timing and our ability to get after these weeds,” he says. “Now, I have all the tools I feel like I need.”

While the system has been popular with organic farmers, interest continues to grow among non-GMO and even conventional farmers who find themselves battling herbicide-resistant weeds such as waterhemp and Palmer amaranth.

“We sold a unit to a guy farming down in Arkansas this past season growing 100% conventional soybeans,” Ben says. “He was losing the battle against waterhemp, and the cocktail of chemicals kept getting more expensive. A conventional farmer still would want to put down a preemergent herbicide program, but the Zapper can eliminate those late-season weed escapes that herbicides can’t.”

> SCRATCHING THE WEED-CONTROL SURFACE

Thanks to growing demand for alternative, nonchemical weed control, Old School Manufacturing continues to innovate and expand. In 2025, the company introduced a new electrode called the Scratch Pad Applicator. Made of aluminum and featuring an aggressive sawtooth design, it can replace the original smooth copper bar on the company’s newer models.

“It literally scratches the weeds, which brings plant sap to the surface and improves conductivity,” Ben explains. “We’ve seen increased kill rates on some of the tougher weeds like lambsquarters and johnsongrass even later in the season when plant stems get tougher. We’ve also had customers tell us they’re covering acres faster with the new applicator.”

Earlier this year, the company moved Weed Zapper production from its 13,000-square-foot shop in Sedalia, Missouri, to a brand-new 30,000-square-foot building west of town. The new facility sits on 140 acres that the Kroegers plan to farm and use as testing grounds for future Weed Zapper models. That includes a new electric weeding system that also debuts this year: the Terminator Series Digital Cultivator.

“The original Weed Zapper was designed to kill weeds that had broken through the canopy, but it couldn’t get to weeds between the rows,” Ben says. “The Digital Cultivator uses energy on a different voltage range and allows us to control those weeds between the rows when they’re smaller. We think it’s going to be a real game changer.”

Kroeger notes that some preliminary testing at the University of Wisconsin found that the new machine



reduced in-row weed pressure when compared to two different camera-guided cultivator systems, reduced weed seed germination and increased crop yields.

Just minutes after receiving a jolt of electricity from a Weed Zapper, a common cocklebur weed is already wilting.

“During single-pass testing on fallow ground, the Digital Cultivator eliminated weed biomass by 90% at 1.5 mph and by 70% at 3 mph,” he adds. “This year, our primary focus is to improve that speed to 4 mph or more.”

This year, Weed Zappers range in price from around \$80,000 for a tractor-mounted, PTO-driven Annihilator Series model with a 20-foot boom to around \$305,000 for a self-propelled Terminator Series with a 60-foot boom.

“We’ve had organic farmers tell us that they’ve paid for a machine in one year,” Ben says. “I had a conventional farmer in Minnesota growing 400 acres of sugar beets and 200 acres of soybeans tell me that if he could cut out 70% of his chemical cost, the Zapper would pay for itself in five years.”

Speed of operation also has increased on newer models running the Scratch Pad Applicator, and after the initial purchase, the cost of operation is minimal, he explains.

“New units can run 5 mph, and with a 40-foot boom, you’re able to cover 25 to 30 acres per hour easily,” Ben says. “Diesel consumption ranges from 1 gallon to 1.5 gallons per acre, so if you don’t bend something or back into something, that’s really your only cost to operate. Make two or three passes, and the machine will make money using it as a maintenance tool.” ///

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, visit <https://theweetzapper.oldschoolmanufacturing.com>

ELECTROCUTION SOLUTIONS

When it comes to using electricity to control troublesome weeds, there's more than one way to go about it. Today's commercially available machines use one of two methods for delivering the killing current: spark-discharge or continuous-contact, which differ in how the electricity is transmitted.

Units using the spark-discharge method, which was the initial design for this technology, deploy a high-voltage current when weeds come into contact with a single, unshielded electrode, such as a copper bar or The Weed Zapper's Scratch Pad Applicator. This method is effective at killing weeds in row crops such as soybeans, sugar beets and some vegetables when the weeds are taller than the crop canopy.

Machines that employ the continuous-contact method create a circuit between two sets of electrodes, the weed and the soil. The electrodes drag along the ground, delivering current to any plants that come into contact. Continuous-contact electrical weeders can be used for burndown prior to planting or, if shielded, can target weeds between crop rows. They are often designed to be deployed in orchards and vineyards.

Several companies around the world offer electrical weeding machines:

crop.zone

The German company offers a continuous-contact electrical weeder that combines three components: a generator attached to the tractor's PTO, a "boom" that delivers electricity and a proprietary conductive liquid said to improve effectiveness. In 2025, it was reported the company was expanding into the U.S. market through a partnership with Big Iron Equipment.

<https://www.thefarm.zone>



Lasco Lightning Weeder

Available in the U.S. and designed for row crops, the company's LW-10 is a commercial, tractor-mounted, PTO-driven spark-discharge unit. The power unit hooks to a 3-point attachment, and the applicator bar can be mounted in front or used as a pull-behind. Lightning Weeder requires a tractor that delivers a PTO with at least 120 horsepower. <https://lightningweeder.com>



RootWave

With distribution in Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the U.K., the RootWave system is a continuous-contact electrical weeder for use in orchards and vineyards. Designed for smaller tractors, RootWave's design has electrodes on spring-loaded arms, allowing weed control around the base of trunks. These units require between 64 and 107 PTO horsepower.

<https://rootwave.com>



The Weed Zapper

Based in Missouri, Old School Manufacturing is the only company on this list that offers both spark-discharge options with its Weed Zapper Annihilator and Terminator series, and a continuous-contact option with its Terminator Series Digital Cultivator. <https://theweetzapper.oldschoolmanufacturing.com>



Zasso

The Swiss-based company manufactures the Zasso XPower series of continuous-contact electrical weeders for use in various specialty crops, such as citrus, orchards and coffee. The XPS system features either fixed or movable electrodes with a spring-loaded design that allows passive rotation around the stem or trunk of vines and trees. Zasso also has a line of electrical weeders for residential, commercial and other noncrop areas. <https://zasso.com>



Succession's Secret Sauce

Management succession in a family business is easy to define but hard to do. Put simply, it is the act of transferring authority and responsibility to the next generation. In practice, it is anything but simple.

Why Succession Is Hard

Succession involves relinquishing control of your business, which you've managed for decades. It needs communication, which is notoriously difficult in family businesses. It challenges your identity as a farmer or rancher, a vocation not so easily shed. It requires getting comfortable with the next generation's approach to business and life, which can be quite different than how you were raised or taught.

Succession also causes you to confront your mortality and your purpose in life. It forces you to consider the next chapter of your life story, when you may consider your current chapter unfinished. It's no wonder that people hesitate to engage in succession planning and transition discussions.



GETTY IMAGES

The Psychology of Succession

It's tempting to solve succession planning with checklists, timelines, organizational charts, job titles and legal documents. Such tools are indeed part of the solution and a necessary part of the transition effort.

The problem is that succession is as much a psychological and behavioral transition as it is a management, ownership, legal, financial or tax transition. Succession requires you to think and act differently, not just create plans. It means changing how you see your work on the farm or ranch, moving from doing the work or leading the team to watching or helping someone else do the work. And, if you stay around, it means submitting to someone else's leadership.

It is difficult moving out of the top spot but still being around the farm and watching someone else take over the daily work. In nonfamily business settings, the CEO seldom stays around after a leadership transition. He or she knows the next leader will lead differently, and that change will be hard to watch.

Succession is built on your accomplishments, as the very act of transitioning means the business has survived

the economic cycles of agriculture through at least one generation and usually several. But, as the next generation begins to take over, it also brings your shortcomings into focus. The next leader changes the business, and those changes can feel like a critique of the way you operated.

Friendship to the Rescue

The longest-running study on human development, the Harvard Study of Adult Development, has found that "close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives." Furthermore, psychologists suggest that friendships

help delay mental and physical decline, reducing the risk of loneliness, depression and anxiety while bolstering self-esteem.

I've seen firsthand through my work with family businesses and peer groups that friendships—particularly among senior generation members who are going through the succession process—can help smooth the transition. Friends can encourage you. They can challenge and critique you.

If you let them, they can hold you accountable for making progress. A small group of friends serves as your personal board of directors.

Friends are the people with whom you can share your hopes and concerns about succession. Perhaps one of your friends has been through a similar transition and has wisdom to offer. More likely, the mistakes they made can be instructive for your own transition experience. Friendships are where you find commonality, security and support.

C.S. Lewis said, "Friendship is born at the moment when one person says to another 'You too? I thought I was the only one.'" Try looking to your friends for help with succession—you may be surprised at how they help. ///



Email Lance Woodbury at lance.woodbury@pinionglobal.com



Why Every Farm Needs This File

A simple file can provide business clarity when you need it most.

Tara Barrett-Duzan knows how fast life can change. In 2018, the death of her father put the responsibility for the Hume, Illinois, family farm on her shoulders. (See “From Tragedy to Legacy,” on pages 18 through 20 in the December 2025 issue of *Progressive Farmer*.) Even though she’d been working on the farm for several years, she quickly faced a multitude of complex financial decisions.

“Dad had suggested to me several times that we should sit down and talk about the financial details of the farm. I waived him off by saying we had lots of time for those discussions. Turns out, we didn’t,” she says.

> SET UP RED FILE

Ethan Smith has heard similar stories many times as a family business consultant for Pinion, an accounting and specialized consulting firm focused on food, agriculture and manufacturing. There’s a simple tool called a “red file” that he suggests as a starting point to help prepare for such life transitions.

A red file is a curated collection of essential documents designed to help guide family or business

partners through the process of taking the business forward when disruptions happen.

“It provides a resource for those left behind, ensuring that decisions can be made confidently, timely and in alignment with intentions,” Smith says. “It also reduces the emotional burden on family members during an already-difficult time. In agriculture, where timing is everything, delays in accessing financial accounts or lease agreements can disrupt planting, harvesting or sales. The red file is a safeguard against these risks.”

Unfortunately, those are details that don’t always get shared. In agriculture, we tend to operate with a more informal structure, Smith notes. Handshake lease deals, undisclosed partnerships or even well-intended agreements sometimes never make it into writing.

“When the key decision-maker passes, many times, so do those arrangements. This can lead to confusion, conflict and even the loss of assets or business lines,” he stresses.

> SPELL OUT DETAILS

“A red file isn’t just about documents, passwords or wishes: It’s about providing clarity, reducing stress and ensuring that your business legacy and wishes are

A list of key farm contacts is vital if the unexpected happens. Tara Barrett-Duzan (left) consults with Stephanie Bowyer, ADM Grain, about marketing decisions.

JASON JENKINS

honored. In contrast to your will, this collection should include the unique things that make your business yours,” Smith continues.

A “who’s who” of farm business partners is a first good step, because it often is one of the first things needed, Smith says. “Knowing who knows the particulars of the business or who has been trusted is always important but even more so in moments of crisis,” he adds.

Those were some of the details Barrett-Duzan was fortunate enough to secure before her father’s death.

“Knowing who Dad counted on and trusted was the key to being able to continue farming,” she says. “The community around me supported me in so many ways, and I still depend on many of those people.”

It also helped that her father, Ron Barrett, was a meticulous recordkeeper. Still, more than seven years later, small questions continue to pop up like weeds after a spring rain.

“Often, it is a question of ownership or who is responsible for maintenance of something. Dad could have answered these questions in an instant because he knew the history,” she says.

➤ PREPARE AND SHARE

Smith says creating a red file doesn’t require legal expertise. “It requires thoughtfulness and organization. Start by gathering the documents. Use folders, both physical and digital, to keep everything accessible and secure. Labeling these items may seem cumbersome; however, just like the ‘Table of Contents’ is sometimes the most important page in a book, labeling may be one of the most important tasks,” he suggests.

There are some known resources available with guides on how to structure your red file, like Nokbox (<https://www.thenokbox.com>) and other subscription-based models.

“Identify who should know about the red file,” Smith explains. “This might include your spouse, children, business partners or your attorney. Let them know where it’s stored and how to access it. If you use digital storage, access instructions should be included and the whereabouts known.”

Life changes, so regular updates are essential. Smith urges families to view the red file as a gesture of caring.

“It can ensure calm and peace of mind in a time of grief while helping your family and business partners understand that you’ve done your best to prepare them. For agricultural families and family-held businesses, where legacy and stewardship are central values, the red file is an assurance of those principles,” he says.

“It’s not meant to be morbid,” Smith continues. “It’s meaningful. And, that clarity may be one of the most important mementos that you can pass on.” ///

For more information on Pinion family business advising, scan the QR code at right or visit:

<https://www.pinionglobal.com>

and

<https://www.pinionglobal.com/services/family-business-advising/>



What Belongs in a Red File?

A RED FILE INCLUDES:

- A copy of your will or trust documents
- Key contacts (attorney, accountant, financial adviser, executor, landowner, vendor partners, etc.)
- Account statements and insurance policies (more importantly, life insurance, long-term care insurance or retirement accounts)
- A list of assets, including land, equipment and business holdings (could be your insurance summary or a handwritten list)
- Passwords for account access
- Personal notes or letters to family members
- Succession plans and buy-sell agreements (critical additions in family-held businesses)

Deere Reveals E98 Tractor

Prototype is powered by a modified engine fueled on E98 ethanol.

John Deere is working on a new version of its 8R tractor, this one mounting its reliable 9.0-liter engine but modified to burn E98 ethanol. Deere says the prototype 350-hp spark-ignited ethanol engine produces torque similar to its diesel cousin and eliminates diesel exhaust fluid (DEF).

“This is a standard 8R platform. But, what we’ve done is we’ve taken the current 9-liter engine that we use in every 8,000 Series tractor, and we’ve converted it over to ethanol,” says Harold (Buddy) Kavalier, large tractor engine research strategist at John Deere Power Systems. “The customers we’ve had run this, when they get out of it, they were shocked. It was not what they expected they were going to see in terms of performance,” he says. “The bottom end [torque] would be a little different than the diesel. But, it doesn’t take far into the power curve [that this engine] compares quickly with the diesel. For a lot of customers, this will work great, and they can source fuel more cheaply.”

Deere put a few of its E98 tractors into the field last year in Illinois and Iowa, as well as Brazil. “We logged hours on [the E98 8Rs] last fall with three different customers, and we never really had any major issues. There were a few things that we’re still working on, but in general, the tractor performed. We had no downtime,” Kavalier says.

Deere will be putting additional units into the field this year. But, it has not announced an initial commercial production date. “Normally, we wouldn’t show a tractor like this for a number of additional years. But, the reason we’re showing this is to get that market feedback early from customers. If this is something that they’re interested in, we can chase it,” he explains.

E98 is a fuel used in performance racing and motorsports. It is blended with a 2% denaturant, often gasoline. There are no government statistics on how much E98 is produced annually in the U.S., but one source estimated it would be in the lower millions of gallons annually at most.

For agriculture uses, E98 requires mechanical adaptations—timing and turbocharging to push the pistons down with force, and injectors and pumps to deliver high ethanol flows to sustain torque.

“The [9.0-liter] is one of the great engines out there for reliability and durability. From a building-block standpoint, it’s mainly the cylinder head deck on up [that] is where



things change. Different air system. Different fuel system,” Kavalier says. “We’ve got spark plugs and plug wires. Of course, some of those parts will be maintenance components, and that’s something we’ve got to work our way through.”

□ *John Deere is field-testing its E98 8R prototype.*

There are other considerations:

► **Cold Starts.** In colder climates, it is more difficult for higher-concentration ethanol to vaporize. “I would say we’re feeling like we’re over the hump on a lot of that,” he says. Flexible-fuel cars capable of burning E85 fuels have sensors that detect ethanol content and adjust fuel delivery. In cold weather, engine control units (ECUs) provide a more highly enriched fuel.

► **Compression.** Ethanol’s high-octane rating allows for high compression without “knocking.” But, there are challenges to balancing high pressure with durability.

► **Lubricity.** Ethanol has almost no lubricating properties. Ethanol attracts moisture and can be corrosive to some rubbers, plastics and metals. But, there are chemical formulations, additives and coatings to manage ethanol’s less-desirable characteristics.

On a British thermal unit (BTU) basis, ethanol and diesel differ. The ratio is about 1-to-1.72. On a BTU basis, a gallon of diesel is equivalent to about 1.72 gallons of ethanol. Kavalier says 1.72 gallons of ethanol is less expensive than 1 gallon of diesel by 15 to 30% in normal market conditions and likely more given the Iran war disruptions to the global oil market.

The characteristics of ethanol raise logistical challenges. Deere is working with the National Corn Growers Association, Iowa Corn Growers Association, ethanol producers and even manufacturers of fuel trailers.

Ethanol requires new storage practices. Pouring E98 into used tanks raises the risks of fuel contamination. And, to store similar amounts of energy, ethanol-dedicated tanks will have to be larger—a consideration of volume similar for the fuel transported to the field. ///

Burning EGR Question

Can you explain to me what an exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) valve does in an engine? I've had to replace it on a couple of pieces of newer equipment, and it's costly. Why do we need it on an engine? All my older trucks and tractors seem to work great without it. Am I trying to burn burned fuel again? Why do we need to send exhaust gases back through the engine?

Steve: The EGR valve (see photo) is a major component of the EGR system, and it is normally closed unless the engine is under load. The heavier the load, the more it opens. This valve connects the exhaust system to the intake manifold. It returns a small portion of the exhaust gas back into the engine's intake manifold, allowing for cooler combustion temperatures. This can happen because the burned exhaust gas replaces a small portion of the oxygen present during the burn. This makes for a cooler burn because it allows all the oxygen during the burn to be burned. Less oxygen in the burn lowers combustion temperatures, which lessens the amount of NOx (nitrogen oxides available for air pollution) emitted. The EGR valve can be controlled by a vacuum or an electric stepper motor. The stepper motor can turn just as needed. You can see a stepper motor in action when you put money in a snack machine and push the button for your bag of chips. The screw rod holding the bag is attached to a stepper motor that will turn just enough to drop one bag of chips.



Shock Treatment

I have a John Deere 855D Gator that has begun to ride rough and seems to move around on the rear end when starting off forward or reverse. It's like one side of the Gator is twisting from side to side. What is going on here, and is it an expensive fix? It's been a warrior for work around the farm and ranch, and I don't want to ruin the rear end.



Steve: Yes, this 855D is a tough machine, and that little diesel engine runs forever with minimal repair bills. What is wrong with the Gator is that all the suspension bushings and possibly the shocks on the front and back are worn from constant motion when the Gator is moving. When the bushings that support the front and back get worn, the Gator rests lower to the ground and has rear side-to-side movement because of the torque present when accelerating from a standstill or when



Have a mechanical problem you can't resolve? Email Steve Thompson at askthemechaniccolumn@gmail.com

Please include your contact information and phone number.

going in reverse. The fix is to replace the rubber bushings. That sounds simple, but it takes a little time to replace all 32 of the bushings (eight at each wheel) in the front and rear of the machine (see photo, below left). They fit very snugly in place, so be patient when replacing them. Applying a little silicone grease around and in each bushing really helps. Many times, the grease fittings on each of these bushings are ignored, causing premature wearing. After rebushing, your Gator will ride and drive like new.

Headache Relief

When replacing the head on an engine after head work, do you recommend using some kind of sealer on the head gasket?

Steve: I am a big fan of a product called copper coat. It is available at most auto stores, and I have found it to be a great product. After spraying a thin coat on each side of the head gasket, torque the head as the engine manufacturer suggests. The amount of torque and the torque pattern and sequence are very important. If you don't know the specifications for your engine, find them in a tech manual, from a dealer for that product or online. Don't guess, or it can cause a future headache.

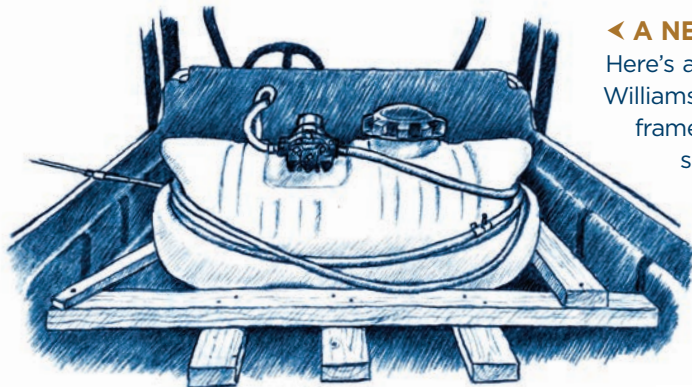
SAFETY TIP



Always be aware of tire condition and pressure on all your tires. That thin layer of air and rubber is the only thing between you and danger on the road. I'm as guilty as anyone of hooking to a rested grain trailer and heading to the elevator or a semiretired cattle trailer and heading to a cattle sale without checking tire pressure. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that, on average, there are nearly 11,000 tire-related motor vehicle crashes with approximately 200 deaths each year, mainly caused by poor tire maintenance. Don't be a statistic: Check the air pressure. As Alexander Pope said, "To err is human." ///

Handy Devices

Easy-to-build ideas make your work easier.

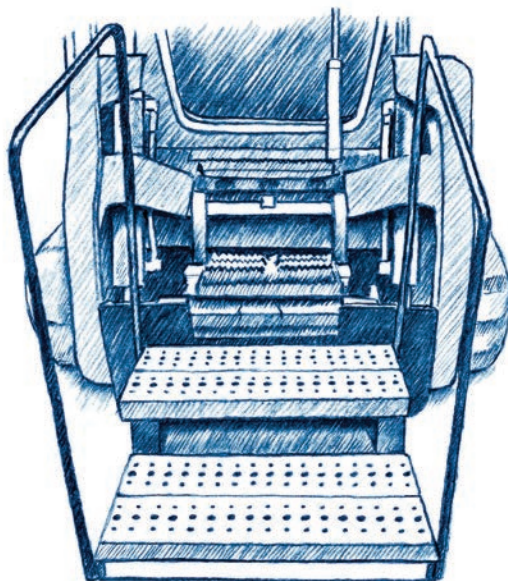


◀ A NEST OF WOOD

Here's a very simple Handy Device. Rick Williamson, San Antonio, Texas, built a wood frame with scraps of 2 x 4s and a few wood screws. Williamson built the frame to fit into the bed of his UTV and in a shape that nestles his 16-gallon spray tank into the frame. That frame keeps the tanks secure as he travels across the fields of his farm. Simple. Handy.

STEP TO SAFETY ▶

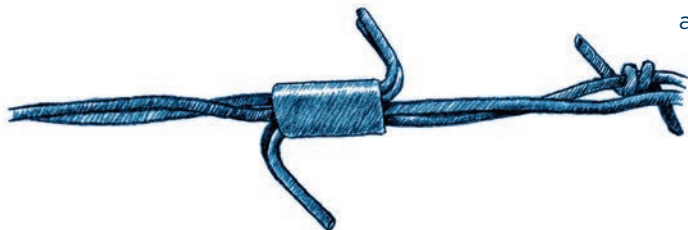
David Drake, Girard, Illinois, walks with two crutches. He spends most of his time in his skid steer with the cuts and bruises on his legs to prove it—and with the constant danger of falling. With the help of a friend, Quentin Drew, they used metal angle iron to form the base for two steps and then welded them to an old attachment plate. Using semi deck plates, they covered the steps. Drew bent metal tubing to form handrails. Everything needed to create safe access into the skid steer came from the junk pile. Drake drives up to an attachment, drops the steps, hooks up and is good to go. He reverses the procedure when he's finished. This makes his day easier and much safer.



▼ NO-TOOL REPAIR

Richard Peters, St. Marys, Kansas, found an easy way to repair a broken wire that is neat, clean and requires no tools. He joins the broken ends with $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-long pieces of $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch copper tubing.

With the wires inside, Peters flattens the tubing and bends the exposed ends to prevent “pull through.” The bent ends also function as additional barbs. In some cases, he adds, where additional length is needed, a short piece of barbed wire and second splice may be required.

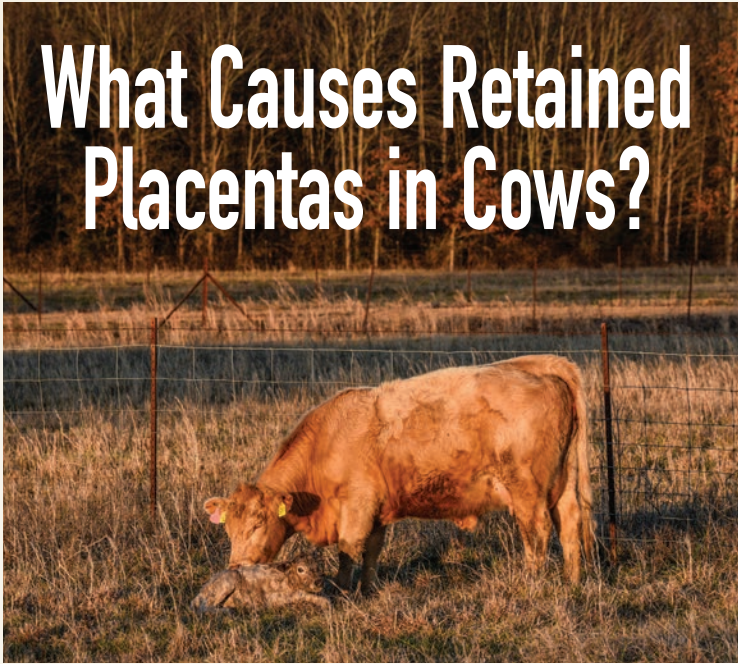


CASH FOR YOUR IDEAS: Share with us your project ideas, and we'll pay you \$400 upon publication. To submit a Handy Device, please send a complete explanation of your idea and clear photographs or detailed drawings. We'd like to see a video, too, but that's optional. If you've published your idea on social media (X, Instagram, Facebook), send us the link. With each entry, include your name, address and telephone number. Send Handy Device entries to: dan.miller@dtm.com. Sorry, but we cannot acknowledge submissions or return photographs, drawings or documentation.



Email Dr. Ken McMillan
at vet@dtm.com

What Causes Retained Placentas in Cows?



BECKY WILLS

Q We had a cow with a rectal prolapse. By the time we found her, it was old and black, and she couldn't even hold her head up. Our veterinarian could not get there until the next day, and we could not haul her in, so we decided it was best to put her down. Her calf was about 2 months old and seemed healthy. What could have caused this, and is there anything we need to do to prevent it in the future?

A **DR. McMILLAN:** Prolapses are unfortunately a fact of life in cattle. Cattle can prolapse the vagina, uterus or rectum. In simple terms, these tubular structures get turned "wrong-side out." They are easy to identify by the exposed red tissue.

In many cases, a vaginal prolapse can lead to a rectal prolapse because of the straining. Rectal prolapses in calves infected with coccidia or severe diarrhea leading to straining is the most common reported cause of rectal prolapse. I have seen calves on high-concentrate feeds with rectal prolapse that I have attributed to excessive rumen fill or, in some cases, ruminitis leading to diarrhea and straining. In one farm, we were able to find what we think was a genetic link in some of the calves, so I will repeat that I think almost everything has some heritability to it.

In an adult cow, I would expect this could be from excessive rumen fill that could result from poor-quality hay or anything that could trigger diarrhea, including a sudden diet change such as lush forages or a large amount of feed.

Since this cow was so sick, acorn toxicity should be on the list. Acorns and oak leaves can lead to acute, severe and often deadly kidney disease. Affected cattle often go off feed, seem depressed, lose weight, are dehydrated and can be constipated or have dark, black diarrhea with excessive straining. Poor body condition and inadequate feed increase the potential for toxicity. Green acorns seem to be more toxic, so issues are more common after a storm that blows off large numbers of acorns or blows down limbs with green leaves.

Rectal prolapses are an emergency and must be corrected quickly before too much tissue damage is done. Most can be easily corrected by your veterinarian. Typically, we use an epidural to deaden the area and stop the straining, correct the prolapse and place a purse string suture around the anus to prevent recurrence. When a large amount is prolapsed or the tissues are damaged, the exposed portion must be amputated, but I have had good success with this in most cases. ///

Please contact your veterinarian with questions pertaining to the health of your herd. Every operation is unique, and the information in this column does not pertain to all situations. This is not intended as medical advice but is purely for informational purposes.

These are only my thoughts and general guidelines. Please get with your veterinarian and together develop the best program for your herd.

Q We have had several cows with retained placenta this season. Do you have any idea what is going on? How do you suggest we treat them? Some say pull it out, and another person said to tie a stick on it to help slowly pull it out. So, I am confused.

A **DR. McMILLAN:** This is a common question we have discussed here in the past, but it is never a bad topic to review. It is a common problem with lots of misinformation.

I do not consider a placenta to be retained for at least three days, and I do not recommend treatment unless the cow is visibly sick. I have infused many cows and used oxytocin and Lutalyse over the years, but there is little evidence that any of this is beneficial. A retained placenta needs a controlled infection within the uterus for the fetal tissues to release from the uterus. Antibiotics either injectable or intrauterine can slow this infection down and actually slow the release of the placenta. If the cow is sick, injectable antibiotics may be indicated. Please check with your veterinarian for his or her recommendation about which antibiotic to use. With very sick cows, I will occasionally infuse with warm dilute Betadine solution to remove the toxic fluids. Oral or intravenous fluids may also help if the cow is dehydrated.

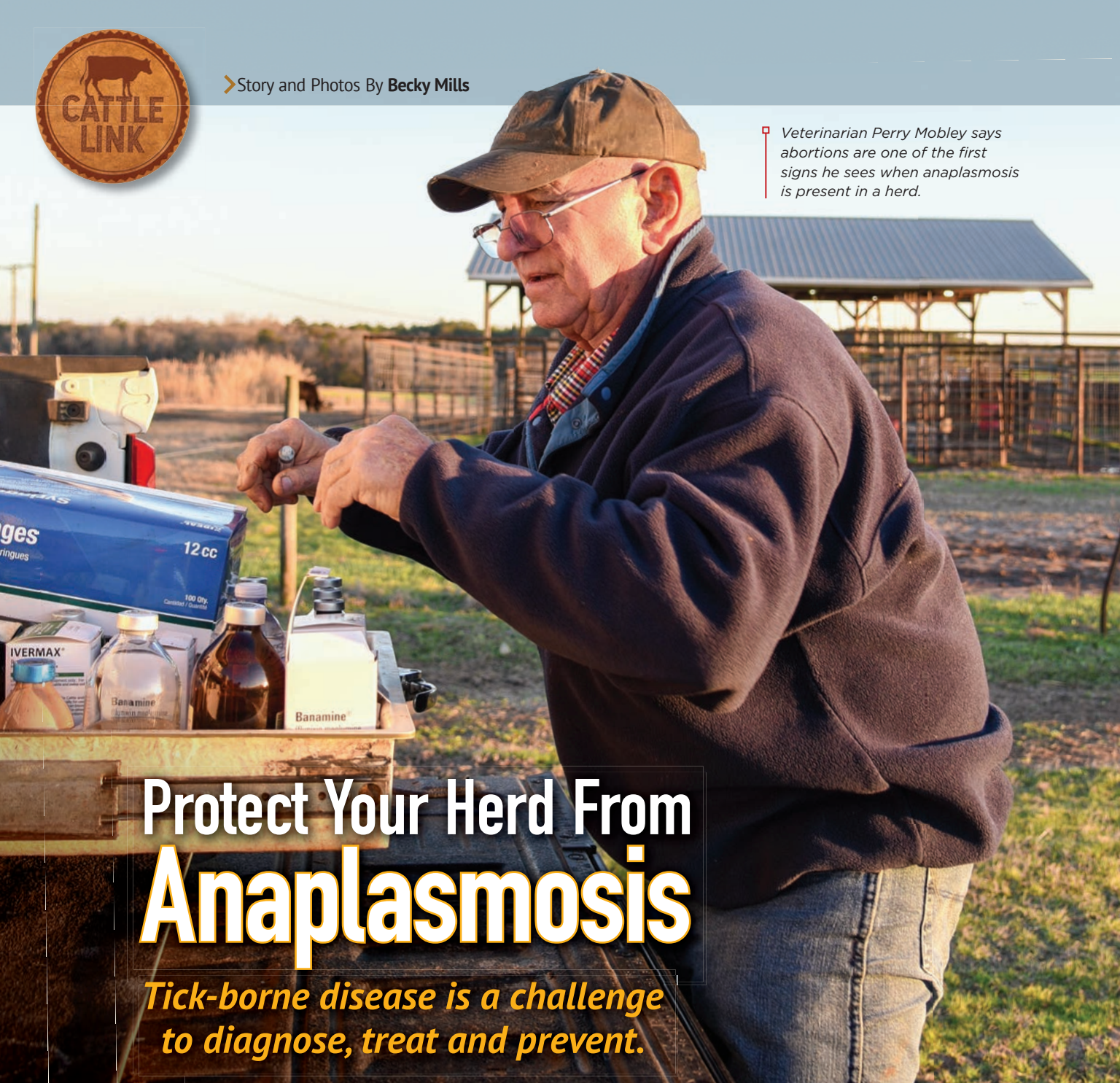
The more important question is why does this happen? Retained placentas are more common if cows are too thin or too fat. Poor nutrition also can be involved. Make sure your cattle are getting adequate protein and energy, and are on a high-quality mineral. We know low vitamin E and selenium increase the risk of retained placenta. Low calcium or magnesium around birth can lead to weak or "downer" cattle, which increases retention. Twins, difficult birth and abortion are also factors.

So, look at your nutrition program and the body condition of your cows. Select bulls to minimize dystocia. Investigate the cause of abortions. And, be patient. Most placentas will pass with time.



› Story and Photos By **Becky Mills**

Veterinarian Perry Mobley says abortions are one of the first signs he sees when anaplasmosis is present in a herd.



Protect Your Herd From Anaplasmosis

Tick-borne disease is a challenge to diagnose, treat and prevent.

Anaplasmosis is one of those diseases that will keep you awake at night. For starters, it's aggravating to diagnose. Sure, a simple blood smear will identify the responsible organism, *Anaplasma marginale*, unless you live in Florida, where anaplasmosis insists on being special and has its own strain.

So, what's the problem? Isaac Jumper, Mississippi State University (MSU) veterinarian, says, "When we see cases of anaplasmosis, it's typically in the fall. If you don't find the carcass quickly, there's not going to be a whole lot we can do from a necropsy standpoint. So, we likely underestimate the impact of anaplasmosis."

He adds, "Although this disease was historically found around the Gulf Coast regions, it is an emerging disease in other places in the United States. We're moving cattle to places we've never moved them before."

› DISEASE BASICS

First, though, a little Anaplasmosis 101. The Dermacentor tick, commonly found in the Southeast, is usually the culprit. When it feeds on an infected cow, the bacteria infects the tick where it replicates. When the tick bites another cow, it infects the cow.

“Ticks do not discriminate,” Jumper adds. “They feed on other mammals, particularly white-tailed deer. We can have a tick that hops on a deer in one part of the state and ends up in a cow herd in another place, because ticks move around on the host they feed on. Ticks can also be a reliable way of moving the organism around in different herds.”

Once a cow is infected, Jumper says the incubation period may range from seven to 60 days. You won’t see clinical signs until this incubation period is up. However, he says, “That’s very variable, and it really depends on how much of the organism the cow comes in contact with initially. If it’s a small amount, it takes longer for the animal to develop clinical signs. If it’s a larger amount, it can happen more quickly, because clinical signs are derived from the amount of red blood cell destruction that happens in a short period.”

Ticks aren’t the only villains. Once a cow has anaplasmosis, biting flies can spread it, not because it replicates in their bodies but by carrying a tiny drop of blood from an infected cow then biting another cow.

Well-meaning humans are also guilty. Using the same needles, ear tag applicators or castration knives can spread the disease.

There are symptoms, but they vary from vague to too late. *Anaplasma marginale* attacks red blood cells and

causes anemia. Jumper says cows can act lethargic and lose weight, and the lack of oxygen to their brain can cause them to be aggressive—all symptoms anaplasmosis shares with other diseases. “We can see abortions. The unique thing about anaplasmosis is it’s not actually killing the fetus, it’s the lack of oxygen-carrying capacity,” he says.

Shorterville, Alabama, bovine veterinarian Perry Mobley says abortions are usually the first thing he sees with anaplasmosis. However, he adds, “The other thing is just dead cattle.”

Jumper agrees. If the carcass is found before it deteriorates too badly, he also says there are signs of jaundice. “That yellowing of the skin and mucus membranes is a result of the breakdown of those red blood cells. In black-hided animals, you’ll see it around the prepuce in bulls or the vulva of cows,” he adds.

If the body is in too bad of shape to do a necropsy, Jumper says not to automatically assume it is anaplasmosis. He says producers need to work with their veterinarian since anaplasmosis is not the only disease that can cause sudden death in cattle.

For example, Jumper did a necropsy on a cow, and she tested positive for anaplasmosis. “The producer insisted anaplasmosis was killing his cows. I said it is not anaplasmosis ➤

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that's killing your cows. She has a body condition score (BCS) of 3.0 in January, and she starved to death. "Often, any mysterious disease that happens between March and October where we just find a dead cow is blamed on anaplasmosis," he continues. "In cases of anaplasmosis, a dead cow may be all we find if we don't catch her in that 12- to 14-hour window when she's experiencing clinical signs."

> A DISCONCERTING DISEASE

Another perplexing trait of anaplasmosis is it typically hits mature cows, Jumper explains.

"This is unique. If calves become infected early in life, they typically do not experience clinical disease but are likely to be carriers for the rest of their life," he says.

The MSU vet adds, "In some cases, it might actually be advantageous if transmission is happening within a herd early in life rather than adult cows becoming infected where they're more likely to experience clinical signs."

If a mature cow is carrying the organism, Jumper says she may develop clinical disease if she experiences some other disease or stressful event. "In healthy carrier animals, the immune response naturally controls the infection, and the bacteria isn't able to replicate enough to cross the threshold of creating clinical signs again."

However, "If the cow is in poor body condition, or we've got circulating IBR [infectious bovine rhinotracheitis] or BVD [bovine viral diarrhea] virus in the herd or a severe parasite infestation, this can be a tipping point, and you can have reoccurrences of clinical disease in some of these cows," he adds.



If you do catch a cow in that short time when she is showing clinical symptoms, you can try to treat her. "We use oxytetracycline on them, IV [intravenous] or Sub Q [subcutaneous]; just get it done," Mobley says. However, he warns, "Once they get down, you ain't hitting on much. They are so anemic, they just run out of gas."

For active infection, chlortetracycline may be used for control but requires a prescription from your veterinarian.

> PREVENTION IS IMPORTANT

Obviously, controlling biting flies and ticks with labeled fly-control insecticides is an option, but good luck with that. You've probably noticed your go-to insecticides are getting more insect-resistant year by year. "Try other products, just like we do in the row-crop business," Mobley advises. "When we get something that's resistant, we gotta come at it at a different angle. It may be an organophosphate. Next time, it may be a pyrethroid. It's sort of like a fella asked me, 'What's the best fly tag to use?' I said, 'If you wait 'til the end of the year, about December, I'll tell you, because you just don't know.'"

A cold, dry climate isn't necessarily in your favor, either. "The worst mosquitoes I have ever seen were at 6,000 feet in the high desert of New Mexico," Mobley says.

Time of year isn't a black-or-white deal, either. "Although we say most cases occur in the fall, it can really be anytime of the year, because in the Southeast, we see ticks and flies almost year-round," explains Jumper.

Don't forget basic biosecurity, either. If your herd is anaplasmosis-free, quarantine any new arrivals until you can get them tested.

If your herd does have a problem with anaplasmosis, Jumper says there is a conditional vaccine through University Products, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. "Producers should visit with their veterinarian about the vaccine, because it may be helpful in their herd."

Once again, he emphasizes, "If you're experiencing a problem with bovine anaplasmosis, it is critical that you work with your veterinarian." He says this will confirm that bovine anaplasmosis is the cause of the illness and he or she can help you develop a plan to treat affected animals and prevent a reoccurrence. ///

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> Story and Photos By **Jennifer Carrico**, @JennCattleGal



From Ranch to the Table

England Cattle Co. builds a legacy on innovation and Brahman excellence.

Ranchers in the Rio Grande Valley have dealt with many challenges through the years. To survive the difficult times, they have to be creative in expanding their operations to remain in agriculture. That is certainly true at England Cattle Co., located in Mercedes, Texas.

As a top Brahman breeder in the U.S., England Cattle Co. has about 200 registered cows and an additional 500 Brahman-influence cattle. They focus on producing top-quality, functional and dependable cattle that excel in the pasture, in the show ring and on the plate. Founded by Mike and Elizabeth England, the operation has grown on the ranch settled by her grandparents. Son, Benton, his wife, Brooke, and their son, Burton, are full-time operators of the ranch.

“We want our genetics to have the competitive advantage but have always had the cow man in mind,” Benton says. They want excellence in maternal and performance traits for their cattle customers; style, eye appeal and soundness in the show ring; and beef quality traits that lead to a good eating experience for their customers.

> CHANGE FORTIFIES A FUTURE

England Cattle Co. started in 1907 and has endured through several generations. The first Brahman cattle came to the ranch in the early 1950s when Elizabeth’s grandfather purchased a registered Brahman bull and a small herd of cows from J.D. Hudgins. Mike also grew up around Brahman cattle in South Texas. He and Elizabeth met and were married in 1982. The two mainly focused on raising commercial Brahman-influenced cattle. The farming operation started to grow in the mid-1990s. The family has continued the commercial cow herd and started adding a registered herd about 15 years ago. They wanted to do something different, however, by having polled Brahmans. This was a major change to their herd and the breed, in general.

“Since the polled genetics were very limited, especially with females, we invested in good horned females to breed to the polled bulls to produce our own polled females,” Benton explains. The Englands purchased a polled herd sire, LMC Polled Authority 115/0, which

was a major foundation of their polled herd. Polled cattle provided better animal husbandry, as horned cattle needed to be dehorned. Reducing the need for dehorning also saved money from the veterinary bill and cattle performance lost during recovery.

Yet, the Englands never lost sight of their first priority—producing quality cattle—and producing quality polled cattle sought after by other breeders. As a result, England Cattle Co. has grown to be the largest polled Brahman breeder in the U.S. This has provided them market opportunities to export semen and embryos to nine countries and 15 U.S. states.



CANDIDS BY CALLIE

The England family—Mike (left), Elizabeth, Burton, Brooke and Benton—enjoys exhibiting at national Brahman shows.

The farming side of the operation has seen its challenges—and changes—too, mostly stemming from water-availability issues in the Rio Grande Valley. Originally, the family primarily grew sugar cane, but those acres are now planted to cotton, as it requires less water. Flood irrigation is used on all the crop and hay ground as well as some of the pastures, with water sourced from reservoirs on the ranch.

“Cotton is our money crop. And, we raise our own hay,” Benton says. Corn is also raised to help feed the cattle. They feed cotton seed as a protein source but must be cautious to not feed it long term or overfeed, as >



it can cause blindness and severe heart and liver damage because of gossypol toxicity. “Feeding a ration of mostly what we raise here on the ranch works for us. We do purchase a show ration for the cattle in the show string,” he adds.

The Englands have both spring and fall calving herds, and all cattle must meet their standards for efficiency, performance, heat tolerance and fertility. These are measured through weights, doability and fertility testing. Brahman cattle are later maturing, but Benton says they also have long stayability. “It’s not uncommon for us to have cows in the herd that are well over 10 years old and still do what they are expected,” he says.



Ensuring their cattle are strong overall in several categories helps provide a market for bulls and females sold each spring in a production sale. Their first sale was in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. “We had done all the planning and were ready to have the sale. The week of it, we decided to add an online broadcast for those who didn’t feel comfortable coming to the ranch,” Benton adds. “I prefer the live auction to help build a relationship with the customer and let them know we

want their success, but this was a great addition that we have continued.”

The May production sale features bulls and females, as well as tours of the herd and meals of the Brahman beef they sell to consumers. Private-treaty cattle sales begin the Monday after the annual sale.

> FARM-TO-TABLE EXPANSION

Another change to the Englands’ operation occurred in 2021. Seeing a need for locally sourced beef in their area, they launched England Cattle Co. Beef, a farm-to-table beef program. “Our local community, now more than ever, wants to know where their beef comes from,” Brooke points out, adding that “the food they are putting on their plate for their family is a healthy source of protein.”

This added value to their cattle, which at times had been discounted by the packer because of the breed. Brahman cattle have been thought of as having meat that was a lower-quality grade and less tender, but the Englands have proven otherwise. Benton explains feeding Brahman cattle can be different than other beef breeds, and finding the correct diet to help develop the meat quality is important. This diet generally consists of corn, cottonseed meal and high-quality forages. “We know we have to utilize all of the animal to maximize our profits,” he says. “We sell everything from tongue to tail.”

Beef was first sold at a local farmers’ market. The product’s popularity now has them attending up to seven farmers’ markets each weekend. Their beef is processed at a USDA certified facility and carries high Choice and Prime grades. It is grass-started and grain-finished.

Processing in vacuum-sealed packages happens after dry-aging for a minimum of 14 days for ideal tenderness and flavor. Research shows meat from Brahman cattle (*Bos indicus*) has lower saturated fat when compared to some of the *Bos taurus* beef breeds.

“Most people don’t think of Brahman beef having high marbling, but some of the cuts, like the hump roast, will have as much marbling as Wagyu beef,” Benton says with a laugh.

England Cattle Co. Beef is sold as individual cuts or bundles, or in bulk or subscription bulk orders. Delivery to the farmers’ markets they attend is available, or beef can be shipped. Benton says one of their newest additions is a subscription beef option where customers get a certain amount of beef in several deliveries throughout the year. “If people don’t want to buy a big freezer but still want to know they will have our beef available for their family, this is a great option,” he says. “We are up to 60 subscriptions, and that keeps growing. Our beef business has grown at a rate of 30% each year for the last few years.” ///

England Cattle Co. Beef

More than 300 cattle are processed each year. Beef cuts start at \$10 per pound depending on the cut of steak, roast or hamburger. Special beef bundles are mostly available for the holidays, including cuts like prime rib roast or Tomahawk rib eyes, and vary in cost, starting at \$32 per pound.

Subscriptions and one-time purchases of one-quarter or one-half beef, including steaks, roasts and ground beef, are available on their website and vary in cost depending on delivery selection.

Benton England says the family loves selling bulls but now has a great option for the cattle that don’t make the cut to be sold in the production sale. These animals are sent to the feedlot and used for the beef business. “We have to be able to guarantee we have meat in the freezer, too,” he says. “We have talked to others who have a similar beef business, and we all know that ranch-sourced beef is better and usually cheaper in the long run than the grocery stores.”

Making important changes and additions to continue the legacy and success of the ranch is important to the entire England family. “You always try to leave the land better than you found it,” Brooke England says. “We want to be good stewards of the land first and stewards of the cattle. I hope the legacy I’d like to leave for my son is that he can see Mom and Dad and his grandparents, and their love for the land, the cattle and their family.”



BEEF, BOURBON AND BREWS

Family adds enterprises to operation so future generations can continue the farm's legacy.



John Evans' young son, Oliver, is running down the corn row ahead of his dad while Evans shows us around a good portion of the family's roughly 2,000-acre operation on rolling land near Little River Academy, in central Texas, south of Temple. "I certainly hope this is sustainable for generations," he says, nodding toward Oliver.

Evans' ancestors came to what is known as Wilson Valley 150 years ago. His family is tied to the six Wilson brothers who first came to the region in 1866. Evans is the fifth-generation farmer-rancher in his family.

"I hope we end up with sixth, seventh and eighth generations that can carry this on," he says.

> DIVERSIFY TO THRIVE

Evans and wife, Erica, have not relied solely on hope to this end. They've boldly pushed to try new business ventures to diversify. The most high-profile of their efforts is Wilson Valley Mercantile, the on-farm distillery they opened in the fall of 2022.

A bourbon connoisseur, Evans wanted to make spirits using crops they grew. Among their offerings is Texas Bloody Butcher, a bourbon made with heritage corn of the same name, and Texas Three Way Bourbon, made from corn, wheat and oats.

Three years into Wilson Valley Mercantile, they've added gin to the whiskey and vodka offerings. Distilled

spirits meant having a cocktail bar, which begat the need to offer beer. They now brew four beers.

"In January [2025], we more than doubled our production, going from running one day a week from September to May to running two days a week year-round," Evans explains. Right now, the distillery produces about 60 gallons of spirits per week and a smaller quantity of beer. These products are only sold on-site. They sell beer growlers to-go at the shop.

"Generally, our goal is to grow the hospitality business," he says. "At some point, we will need to take some leaps forward; but right now, that doesn't make sense."

The drinks led to a commercial kitchen to provide food—and a value-added market for up to 35 head of their cattle annually through menu items like hamburger and thinly sliced steak fingers.

The family also sells Evans Ranch-branded frozen beef on-site, but they don't ship frozen beef at this time.

"I've done some initial research on doing so but haven't gotten past that point," Evans says.

"I think this is the only farm in America where you can get whiskey, beer and beef, with everything raised here," he adds.

> STOREFRONT REPRESENTS LEGACY

Wilson Valley Mercantile tells the story of the Evans family history, John and Erica explain. It is dotted with furniture and fixtures from their family histories. Numerous friends and relatives have helped start the Mercantile and occasionally work there for special events. There are musical performers every evening at no charge to customers, but occasionally, there are ticket sales for acts with higher name recognition.

No doubt, though, the Mercantile adds value to the farm and ranch. "This is also a venue to sell our commodities at higher, value-added prices," Erica says. "It's another way to keep farming and ranching."

The original J.E. Evans General Merchandise (an actual general store) opened in the county in 1911, and the Evans' distillery today is furnished with fixtures from that past, including the original safe and cash register.





> CASH IN ON CROPS

The Evanses aren't strangers to diversification. Erica teaches middle school full time while still working at the Mercantile Thursday through Saturday evenings. "Just don't ask me to do anything come Sunday," she says with a laugh.

The bulk of the operation's corn harvest (1,000 acres plus) is sold as deer corn for wildlife. Most is sold to companies that do their own packaging. This is a business begun by John's father, W.C. Evans, too long ago for John to remember exactly when. He's continued growing corn and selling it to some of the same companies.

Deer corn is No. 2 yellow commodity corn that Evans—by use of combine settings—tries to get as clean as possible at harvest. Additionally, they test each load on the farm for aflatoxin.

"That's an added value for our customers who bag the corn," Evans says of the testing. "Buyers don't then have to test each load they receive. We also eliminate the risk of our corn being rejected after we've shipped it four hours away.

▲ *John Evans hopes his son, Oliver, and others will be the next farming generation.*

▼ *John, Oliver and longtime Wilson Valley Mercantile employee Chris Southerland*



"We grind some of this corn ourselves for cattle feed and sack some of it as deer corn and sell locally," he continues. "The price is better than commodity corn, and anytime you can do that, it's a win.

"A lot of the premium comes from things we do for our customers, such as keeping the corn clean and providing aflatoxin testing," Evans explains. "We also make freight on delivery. I figure we make 10 to 15% above commodity prices, up to 25% in the right situations."

Evans Ranch's main crops are corn, wheat and oats, with some occasional cotton. The distillery has prompted them to grow 5 to 10 acres annually of specialty crops such as barley, rye and various specialty corns.

In addition, Evans runs a precision-farming business. He worked full time in information technology for a decade after attending Texas A&M University prior to returning to the ranch after his father died in 2011. He's been a licensed dealer for Ag Leader for years and consults on and services precision equipment.

"We get a discount in terms of what technology we buy for ourselves," Evans >

explains. “But, it really depends on Mother Nature what folks have to spend on precision farming. So, it fluctuates a lot what we can manage to sell.”

In 2024, Evans also became a Pioneer seed dealer. They plan to build a 40- x 50-foot warehouse to store seed at the ranch in 2026.

“I’m happy with the amount of seed sales we had for the first year,” he says. “Everything we do is adjacent to farming in some way.”

> CATTLE BUSINESS

At any given time, Evans Ranch has 250 to 300 cow/calf pairs in addition to registered Charolais and purebred Brahman cattle.

“My grandfather always maintained a herd of Brahman,” Evans says. “You can put a Hereford bull on them, and the cross makes really good mamas [Braford cattle]. The replacement heifers command a premium when you sell.” What those premiums are Evans can’t say precisely in today’s beef market. “Everything is high right now,” he says. “Fancy heifers or pairs are particularly in demand.”

Evans Ranch raises cattle in locations in three counties.

“We do run some stockers and feed them out on the ranch,” he says. “I could feed out all our cattle every year, but that doesn’t always make sense—sometimes due to the market or whether we have the labor for it.”

The ranch employs one part-time and three full-time workers. Chris Southerland has been Evans’ right-hand man for years, and Southerland’s wife, Amanda, is the operation’s office manager. Evans and Southerland built a lot of the Mercantile themselves.

The Evanses are familiar with frugality—not just in terms of what they can do themselves. The farm and ranch still use a 50-year-old John Deere 4430 and a nearly 45-year-old 4440 in regular rotation. When Evans speaks of his “new” equipment, he’s referring to a 2012 tractor and a 2011 combine.

“I do like a deal,” he admits. This penchant isn’t confined to just farming equipment. When a San Antonio-based bakery went out of business, the Evanses bought its grain-milling equipment.

Their beer brewing setup was purchased from a defunct Temple-based brewery. Part of that deal was that the brewer had to

teach Evans how to make beer. (*Spoiler alert: He’s learned very well.*)

> A FAMILY AFFAIR

Evans isn’t the only member of the family taking on new roles. Their children—Darby, 15; Isabel, 12; and Oliver, 9—are all involved in the operation.

In third grade, Oliver, during show-and-tell at school, told classmates about helping his father make beer. He had to clarify for the class that he doesn’t drink the finished product.

Darby and Isabel have become licensed food handlers and work at the restaurant. It helped inspire Isabel to take up baking. She now sells her pies and other sweets at Wilson Valley Mercantile.

“She’s learning the business of owning and creating,” mom, Erica, says. “Isabel’s learned pricing by taking into account expenses like the



PHOTO BY MELODY CLAMPET, COURTESY OF EVANS RANCH

Every member of the Evans family is involved in various enterprises on their farming operation.

ingredients.” The practical experience all the children are getting with the family’s various businesses resonates now with their FFA and 4-H activities.

This is a far cry from 20 years ago when Evans was pretty certain he wasn’t going to farm and ranch for a living.

“I was actually encouraged by my father, W.C., not to come back because of the economics of the operation back then,” Evans explains. “But, when Dad passed away in 2011, the ranch wasn’t something I was willing to let end.

“I’m still trying to get the hang of farming,” he admits. “It’s like medicine—you practice it.” ///



Slow or Fast



SLOW COOKER CHEESY BROCCOLI CHOWDER

Let this soup cook low and slow all day.

MAKES: 6-8 SERVINGS
TOTAL TIME: 5-6 HOURS

- 1½ pounds baby potatoes
- 1 pound frozen broccoli florets
- 4 cups unsalted chicken broth
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¾ cup half-and-half or heavy cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese, plus more for garnish
- ½ cup sour cream, plus more for topping
- 3 green onions, chopped

1. In a slow cooker, combine potatoes, broccoli, chicken broth, onion, butter, salt and black pepper; cover with lid.
2. Cook on high until potatoes are extremely soft (about 4 to 5 hours).
3. Stir in half-and-half, cheese and sour cream.
4. Use a potato masher to mash soup to your desired consistency. Add 1 to 2 cups water if soup is too thick.
5. Add additional cheddar cheese and sour cream to soup; top with green onions.

INSTANT POT-POT ROAST

The pressure cooker gets dinner on the table in 90 minutes.

MAKES: 4-6 SERVINGS | TOTAL TIME: 1½ HOURS

- 3 pounds boneless beef chuck roast
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1½ cups beef broth
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 pounds baby carrots
- 1½ pounds baby potatoes
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons water

1. Combine beef, onion, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder, beef broth and thyme in a 6-quart Instant Pot or pressure cooker. Cover with the lid.
2. Move the valve to “sealing;” pressure-cook on high 1 hour. Let pressure release naturally for 10 minutes.
3. Add carrots and potatoes; cook on high another 5 minutes, allowing the steam to release naturally for 10 minutes.
4. Remove meat and vegetables from Instant Pot; shred beef into bite-sized pieces.
5. To thicken sauce, turn Instant Pot to “sauté.” In a small bowl, add cornstarch and water; mix well. Add mixture to sauce; simmer over high heat or until slightly thickened. ///



Recipes and Photos By **Rachel Johnson**
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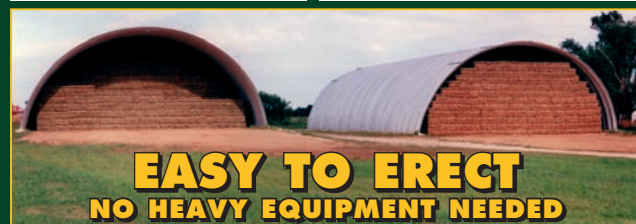
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“It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt



Planning

TVA, PROGRESSIVE FARMER ARCHIVES, 1959

To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

Without leaps of imagination or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all is a form of planning.

GLORIA STEINEM

A man who does not plan long ahead will find trouble at his door.

CONFUCIUS

I ain't Martin Luther King. I don't need a dream. I have a plan.

SPIKE LEE

Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

PROVERBS 24:27 (KJV)

Few people have any next, they live from hand to mouth without a plan, and are always at the end of their line.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act.

PABLO PICASSO

Just because you made a good plan, doesn't mean that's what's gonna happen.

TAYLOR SWIFT

Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.

WARREN BUFFETT

A goal without a plan is just a wish.

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.

JOHN LENNON

Plan your work for today and every day, then work your plan.

MARGARET THATCHER

Always plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.

RICHARD CUSHING

Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Plans are nothing; planning is everything.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

MyAgData Already Delivers for Farmers What USDA Plans to Build by 2028

MyAgData announces it is accepting enrollments for the 2026 acreage reporting season — offering farmers today what USDA's "One Farmer, One File" initiative has targeted for 2028: a **single electronic submission flowing simultaneously to FSA and RMA**.

One Submission →
Goes to **BOTH FSA & RMA**

- ✓ No Office Visits
- ✓ No Duplicate Reporting



MyAgData, the **only USDA-authorized third-party vendor** with active Clearinghouse credentials for electronic acreage reporting, is now enrolling producers for the 2026 season ahead of the July 15 FSA deadline. The company processed more than one million precision acres in 2025 with a **100 percent submission success rate**.

The announcement follows Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins' Feb. 26 unveiling of "One Farmer, One File" at Commodity Classic — a multi-year USDA initiative targeting 2028 completion that would unify FSA and RMA acreage records into a single submission. MyAgData's platform has operated that workflow through the USDA Clearinghouse since mid-2024, converting precision agriculture data from all major equipment manufacturers into a single report distributed simultaneously to both agencies.

The company's federal relationship predates the Clearinghouse itself. MyAgData was contracted by USDA in 2014 to advise on the infrastructure underlying the Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI) and completed six pilot projects with the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) business center over the following decade.

"The 'One Farmer, One File' vision is one we've shared from the beginning," said Michelle Tressel, chief executive of MyAgData. "We've been building this alongside the USDA since 2014.


Farmers don't have to wait for 2028 — they can access that outcome today."



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As USDA moves toward greater data integration, Tressel noted that some producers will prefer to route submissions through a third-party intermediary rather than share detailed precision agriculture data directly with a federal agency. MyAgData's platform is designed for that role — giving growers control over exactly what is submitted, with the ability to review and approve data before it reaches FSA or RMA. No information moves without the producer's explicit sign-off.

Field Results & Benefits from 2025 Growers

- Lowered Crop Insurance Premiums
- Higher APH
- 6.12% Fewer Planted Acres vs. FSA Boundaries
- 95% Producer Retention Rate
- 93% FSA Office Satisfaction
- Faster Processing with Fewer Errors
- Program Payments Received Sooner

"Reporting actual acres using my precision ag data saves me money – 10% difference from my planted acres versus CLU boundaries." — Daniels Farm Partnership, 2025

About MyAgData

MyAgData is a USDA-authorized third-party provider of electronic acreage reporting through the USDA Clearinghouse. Since 2012, the company has helped convert precision ag data from all major equipment brands into FSA- and RMA-compliant submissions. In 2025, MyAgData processed over one million acres with a 100 percent submission success rate.

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