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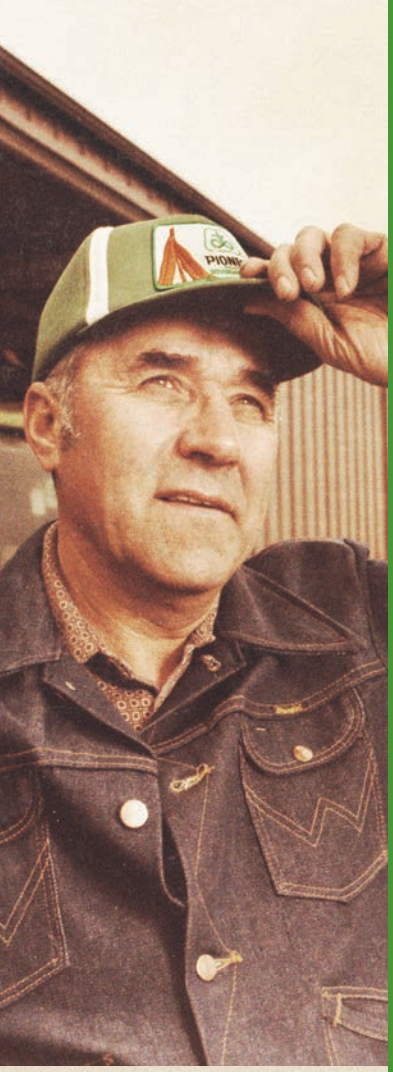
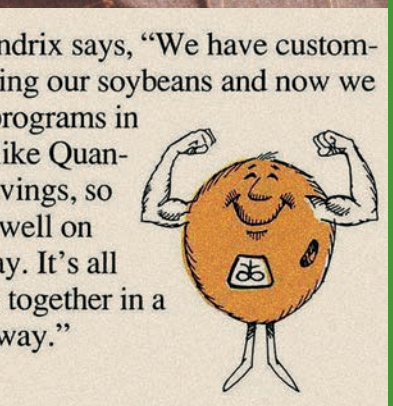
Progressive FARMER

WHEN LEGACY CALLS

- Program Resurrects Worn-Out Pastures
- Shop Gets Makeover After Tornado
- Compensation Plans Put Benefits in Perspective





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Progressive FARMER

THE RISKS OF A "JUST RIGHT" APPROACH TO FUNGICIDES

LEARN MORE INSIDE

Sometimes, thinking about fungicide applications can feel a bit like reading Goldilocks. You may be thinking this year is too dry or too wet for crops to benefit, waiting for just the right time to apply a fungicide, or wondering if you should even make the application at all.

Here's the thing though: Sometimes taking a wait-and-see approach to find the "just right" timing can be costly. We can't predict the weather or disease pressure, and leaving fields with no protection or deficient protection is a big risk. Turn the page to find out how Miravis® Top and Trivapro® fungicides help growers protect fields no matter what the growing season brings.

Miravis® Top | Trivapro®

syngenta®

THE RISKS OF A "JUST RIGHT" APPROACH TO FUNGICIDES

Sometimes, thinking about fungicide applications can feel a bit like reading Goldilocks. You may be thinking this year is too dry or too wet for crops to benefit, waiting for just the right time to apply a fungicide, or wondering if you should even make the application at all.

Here's the thing though: Sometimes taking a wait-and-see approach to find the "just right" timing can be costly. Think back to the weather we experienced in the 2024 growing season. Thanks in part to unrelenting rain and high humidity levels, corn and soybean growers experienced heavier-than-normal disease challenges. These unusual and unpredictable weather conditions were optimal for disease development, sparking abnormal disease spread throughout the South.

In corn Southern rust was a major concern. Tar spot, Northern corn, leaf blight and gray leaf spot were also found in many fields, and ear rot was top of mind as harvests were brought to grain elevators.

In soybeans, red crown rot was a big problem as well as white mold, Sudden Death Syndrome, pod and stem blight, Septoria brown spot, Cercospora and frogeye leaf spot. Some growers even encountered a combination of many diseases, which is highly unusual.

For added complication, this intense disease pressure hit earlier than normal. Many fields required yield-saving foliar sprays in June rather than July, leaving growers scrambling to get a timely application done on short notice.

This past growing season definitely reminded us of the unpredictable nature of diseases. Instead of waiting to see what may develop, a proactive fungicide approach can help protect valuable yields no matter what the season brings—and give you valuable peace of mind.

In soybeans, Miravis® Top fungicide, which contains exclusive powerhouse ADEPIDYN® technology, has consistently protected yield and harvestability year after year. Miravis Top combines two active ingredients to provide broad-spectrum disease control against the toughest soybean diseases, including strobilurin-resistant pathogens. This high-octane protection helps maintain maximum yield potential. On-farm trials prove that Miravis Top offers a 10-year average yield of 68.2 (bu/A),* outyielding competitors 82%–92% of the time.[1]

The hardest-working, longest-lasting corn fungicide, Trivapro® is an absolute workhorse, delivering preventive and curative control of diseases through three modes of action: propiconazole, azoxystrobin, and SOLATENOL® technology. Trivapro has a proven track record of protecting fields from tar spot, gray leaf spot and Southern rust. In 2025 Trivapro outperformed other fungicides, including Veltyma® and Delaro® Complete in a University of Kentucky trial[2].

Additionally, year after year research consistently shows Miravis Top and Trivapro are still solid investments even in years without heavy disease pressure, protecting plants from stress through unrivaled plant-health benefits.

When your yields are on the line, don't wait until conditions are "just right" to act. Plan ahead with a preventive fungicide, and rest assured that your crops are protected no matter what the 2026 growing season throws at us.

[1] On-farm grower strip trials (n=284) 2014-2024: AR (72), IL (82), IN (11), KS (8), KY (1), LA (29), MD (1), MO (38), MS (23), NC (6), OH (1), TN (12). Application Rates: Miravis Top fungicide at 13.7 fl. oz./A applied at R2-R4 soybean.

[2] Trial USNG0F325-2025, University of Kentucky, Dr. K. Wiess, 2025

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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Progressive FARMER

A PERFECT STORM:

DISEASE MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM 2025

With unrelenting rain and high humidity levels, the 2025 growing season brought disease challenges we'll be talking about for years to come. While typically not a threat in the Corn Belt, Southern rust was found in 20 states and as far north as South Dakota, Nebraska and Minnesota, leading many extension specialists and agronomists to proclaim it a top threat to corn yields.

We can't change the past but we can build a better future with high-performing Miravis® Neo fungicide from Syngenta. Turn the page to find out how Miravis Neo helps growers battle tough diseases and improve yields even in low pressure years.

LEARN MORE INSIDE

Miravis® Neo

syngenta®

A PERFECT STORM: DISEASE MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM 2025

Thanks in part to unrelenting rain and high humidity levels, growers experienced unprecedented disease challenges in 2025. One notable anomaly was the spread of Southern rust. While it's not typically a cause for concern throughout the Corn Belt, in 2025 Southern rust was found in 20 states and as far north as South Dakota, Nebraska and Minnesota, leading many extension specialists and agronomists to proclaim it a top threat to corn yields.[1,2]

Southern rust wasn't the only disease wreaking havoc on corn crops. Tar spot, Northern corn leaf blight and gray leaf spot were also found in many fields, and ear rot was a concern as harvests were brought to grain elevators. For added complication, this intense disease pressure hit earlier than normal. Many fields required yield-saving foliar sprays in July rather than August, leaving many growers scrambling to get a timely application done on short notice.

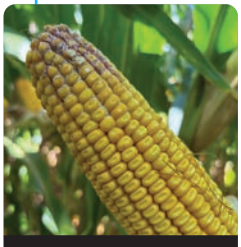
Ben Van Roekel, a second-generation farmer in Iowa, experienced these challenges first hand. "On July 7th we found tar spot, Northern corn leaf blight and Southern rust in our field, which was crazy early for us," he explained.

Fortunately Van Roekel was able to respond quickly with a fungicide application to protect his corn yields, though the application was delayed due to ongoing weather challenges.

"The rains this year have just been basically nonstop. We had well over ten inches in July and we were probably close to ten inches here in August too, so getting applications out there was really challenging," said Van Roekel.

If there's one lesson we can learn from 2025 it's the importance of a planned fungicide application to protect crops from the potential of yield-robbing diseases. For Van Roekel, applying Miravis Neo at VT under heavy disease pressure yielded between 30-50 bu/A more than his untreated checks.

Miravis Neo 13.7 fl oz/A



Untreated

Miravis® Neo fungicide from Syngenta, which contains the powerhouse SDHI molecule — ADEPIDYN® technology — is a top choice to help growers battle back against yield-robbing diseases. Miravis Neo fights all key diseases, dominating spots and blights as well as protecting grain and silage from mycotoxin-causing *Fusarium/Gibberella* ear rots. Additionally, research consistently shows Miravis Neo is a solid investment even in years without heavy disease pressure, protecting plants from stress through unrivaled plant-health benefits.

One way or another, Mother Nature is sure to keep growers on their toes in 2026. But this time, they can be ready. Act now to reserve Miravis Neo supplies for the next growing season and be one step ahead of yield-robbing diseases.

Learn more:

SyngentaUS.com/NeoWins

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[1] https://cropprotectionnetwork.org/maps/southern-corn-rust

[2] https://www.agriculture.com/southern-rust-now-the-no-1-threat-as-disease-spreads-across-corn-belt-11794872

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.

DECEMBER 2025

VOL. 140 / NO. 11

Serving Our Readers Since 1886

JENNIFER CARRICO

ON THE COVER

Tara Barrett-Duzan cherishes a photo from her first harvest as a partner in the family's farming operation.

PHOTO BY JASON JENKINS

FEATURED

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PRINTED IN THE USA

The Progressive Farmer, (ISSN 0033-0760), serving families who have a vital and shared interest in American agriculture and country living, is published monthly in January, February, March, April, May, August, September, October, November, December, and a combined June/July issue, which counts as two issues in an annual subscription. Additional double issues may be published, which count as two issues.

Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, AL, and at additional mailing offices (USPS 447-300). General Editorial Office, PO BOX 430033, Birmingham, AL 35243-0033. Subscription rates in the U.S.: $58.00 for three years, $44.00 for two years, $26.00 for one year. Outside the U.S.: $33 per year. Single copy $5.95.

Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement #40732015 GST #83187 6255 RT0001

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Editor In Chief

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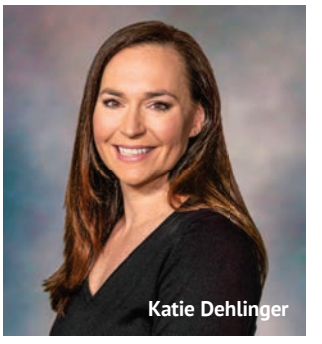
A Change at the Top


Katie Dehlinger

Fifteen years ago, this same headline appeared on We'd Like To Mention as my predecessor heralded my appointment as the new editor in chief of *Progressive Farmer*. Prior to the announcement, this Iowa farm boy had worked other roles at the magazine, initially as a senior editor to report on crops and the crop inputs industry, followed by a stint as executive editor.

For only the eighth time in the 140-year history of *Progressive Farmer*, a new name and signature will appear at the top of the mast page on this column. Katie Dehlinger takes the reins of the magazine as editor beginning with the January 2026 issue.

You are likely already familiar with Katie. She is the current senior farm business editor at DTN, and her byline appears frequently in the magazine as the author of our BusinessLink and Landwatch columns, as well as feature stories on farm business and finance topics.

The Illinois native began covering agriculture as a DTN intern in 2009 after studying journalism at the University of Missouri. She quickly showcased her reporting skills, garnering the attention and respect of colleagues. Later that summer, she joined DTN full time as a wire and copy editor.

Katie was promoted to reporter and markets editor before leaving in 2016 to become executive producer at RFD-TV, based in Nashville, where she directed coverage of farm business issues. Her love of hands-on reporting, however, saw her return to DTN in 2018 as farm business editor.

Since then, she has taken on increasingly more roles and responsibilities. She began leading the DTN Ag Summit, which was first held as an in-person annual event and evolved into a series of online workshops and webinars that continue today. Katie also leads the renowned annual DTN Digital Yield Tour, working with proprietary crop modelers to estimate corn and soybean yields, and sharing the data with farmers and industry across DTN/*Progressive Farmer* digital and print platforms.

The magazine will be in good hands with Katie. Her background with farm business issues and her deep knowledge of commodity markets, her ability to connect with farmers and ranchers, and her unwavering commitment to journalism ethics and practices give her the perfect foundation to lead *Progressive Farmer*.

Katie will carry on the editorial excellence you've come to expect from the company's multiple content platforms. She has earned many awards for her writing from numerous organizations. In addition, she is active in the ag journalism industry. Katie chairs the Agricultural Communicators Network Professional Improvement Foundation and serves on the board of the North American Agricultural Journalists.

As for me, I will be working with Katie for a bit during the transition. Following that, I plan to return to my journalistic roots writing feature stories, tackling photography assignments and working on special projects.

Looking back over my 28 years at *Progressive Farmer* and a 46-year career, I feel forever blessed and filled with gratitude for the countless colleagues I've worked with and the industry partners I've gotten to know.

Most of all, I'm thankful for the immeasurable number of farmers and ranchers who invited me into their homes, tractor cabs, livestock barns, backyards and front porches to spend time answering my questions and sharing their knowledge and experiences that I could craft into stories from which others could learn.

Forty-some years ago, as I prepared to drive away from the Cottonwood Valley Dairy Farm to start my first reporting job, I told my family if this writing gig didn't work out, I would be back. Fortunately, things did. Yet, I've never forgotten my rural roots or the lessons growing up on the farm taught me. Working the land—regardless of the years spent—creates an unspoken bond that is never broken, a bond I will forever share with generations of *Progressive Farmer* readers. ///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Get Your Farm 1031 Exchange Right

It seems like I have seen a substantial number of Section 1031 exchanges with my farm clients this fall. Most have been attributed to solar and data center land sales, but there also seems to be an uptick in inherited land sales. For the most part, 1031s are straightforward. But, you must be aware of some rules and nuances.

Let's start with an explanation of a 1031 exchange. Section 1031 of the Internal Revenue Code allows taxpayers to defer capital gains taxes when they exchange one qualifying property used in a business or held for investment for another "like-kind" property. The IRS defines like-kind as property of the same nature, character or class even if they are a different grade or quality. Real property is like-kind regardless of whether it is improved or unimproved.

Agricultural land is a bit tricky because it's usually not bare land. There might be buildings, irrigation/tiling, a personal residence and water/mineral rights associated with the land. Another issue commonly seen in agriculture is that many exchanges are with related parties.

Agricultural land can be made up of several asset classes such as land, 1250 property and 1245 property. Land can be exchanged for other real property tax-free if the net proceeds and all cash is reinvested in the replacement property. Section 1250 property (buildings—other than livestock or storage) can be exchanged tax-free for equal or greater 1250 property. Section 1245 assets must be exchanged for equal or greater 1245 property for tax-free treatment. Keep in mind that 1245 property for 1031 exchange purposes no longer includes personal property like tractors or vehicles.

Debt also plays a role in 1031 exchanges. Often, the relinquished land is encumbered by debt. The newly acquired land must have an equal or greater amount of debt than the relinquished property. This may require a discussion with your bank prior to the 1031 exchange to remove debt from the land or to make sure you can acquire debt on the new land of an equal or greater amount.

Timing is critical in a 1031 exchange. The taxpayer must identify potential replacement properties within 45 days of selling the original property. The exchange must be completed within 180 days of the sale of the relinquished property. Funds from the sale must be held by a qualified intermediary and cannot be accessed by the taxpayer during the exchange process.

When you identify replacement property within 45 days of the sale, there are several rules to keep in mind. The two main rules to be aware of are the three-property and 200% rules. The three-property rule allows you to identify three properties regardless of the fair market value. The 200% rule allows you to identify any number of properties as long as the fair market value doesn't exceed 200% of the relinquished property.

Special rules apply when 1031 exchanges involve related parties. The related party definition not only includes family members but also entities with common ownership and certain trusts. These are often scrutinized by the IRS for potential tax evasion. If you do a 1031 with a related party, neither can dispose of the acquired property within two years, or deferred gain becomes taxable. You should also document that the exchange was at fair market value and at arm's length to avoid IRS scrutiny.

Section 1031 exchanges are more complex than most people believe. There are a lot of rules to follow, and one misstep can cause the 1031 transaction to be taxable. Before you jump into a 1031 exchange, talk through the details with your attorney and accountant to make sure it will be a tax-free transaction. ///

Rod Mauszycki

DTN Tax Columnist Rod Mauszycki, J.D., MBT, is a tax principal with CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen) in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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

➤ You may email Rod at **taxman@dtn.com**

TOOLS FROM THE PAST

This is one hot tool.
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DTN field posts Progressive Farmer

➤ *DTN/PF Associate Content Manager Elaine Shein recently sat down with host Sarah Mock to discuss various tools, options and programs available to farmers and ranchers seeking financing for their businesses.*

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Dec. 9: WASDE Report: Join DTN Lead Analyst Rhett Montgomery for his insights on the latest world supply and demand outlook and what it means for commodity prices. Registration is free. **www.dtn.com/events**

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@DMillerPF

FIRST LOOK
INSIDE THE MARKET

An Early Look at 2026 Crop Acreage Estimates

In 2025, U.S. corn farmers took the early warning signs of a prolonged trade dispute with top soybean customer China to heart, writing off soybean acres and planting the largest volume of corn area across the U.S. since 1936. The math certainly argues this was the correct decision, as well, with February insurance projections pointing to a roughly $70-per-acre loss on corn compared to $104 per acre for soybeans (not assuming basis adjustment to price). Unfortunately, the market quickly caught wind of the high supply potential for corn in 2025, limiting market opportunities through the growing season and taking a bite out of the bottom line.

Fast-forward to the conclusion of 2025 and looking ahead to 2026, and producers will have a challenging decision on whether to again switch up the acreage mix. As of the end of October, the soybean-to-corn price ratio for 2026 was 2.39, more in favor of soybeans compared to the same point in 2024 but not so high as to be a no-brainer. Using USDA's latest cost-of-production forecasts, the October average of next year's new-crop futures ($4.59 on corn and $10.74 on soybeans), assuming a 10-year average yield, generates a per-acre profitability scenario of an approximate $108 loss on corn and $107 loss on soybeans (again, not taking basis into account). This suggests that the soybean acres may still struggle to gain favor over corn, also likely depending on how the trade war with China progresses. As for wheat, USDA will fill us in on its thoughts for winter wheat acreage in the January "Seedings" report. But, the steady slide to and through contract low prices for Kansas City and Chicago futures this fall suggests the long-term trend of lower wheat acreage in the U.S. may be hard to shake.

Bundling the above together with long-term dynamics, I forecast corn plantings to land somewhere around 93 to 94 million acres in 2026, down roughly 4 to 5% from 2025. I project soybeans at 83 to 84 million, up 2 to 4% from 2025, and total wheat acreage in the 43 to 44 million area, 4 to 5% lower than in 2025.

The past year proved in more ways than one that estimates, no matter how educated, are still guesses. And, we are, of course, still very, very early into the 2025–26 marketing year. A lot can (and will) happen between now and spring 2026 to influence these farm-level decisions, and ultimately, each operation has a unique set of circumstances to consider. However, these are the sort of factors that traders will begin to consider in their market biases after the start of the New Year. So, in my mind, it is never too early to start considering the possibilities. ///

Rhett Montgomery
Lead Analyst

➤ Read Rhett's blog at **ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/MARKETS**

➤ You may email Rhett at **rhett.montgomery@dtn.com**

BRENT WARREN

Katie Dehlinger
Senior Farm Business Editor
➤ Read Katie's business blog at
ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/BUSINESS

My Sentimental (and Economic) Case for Prime Rib

Growing up, the Christmas dinner menu was always more flexible than Thanksgiving. Mostly, we had ham, sometimes turkey, and on a few special occasions, my mom made prime rib. I felt like it was the only meal that could justify using the nice tablecloth and my parents' wedding china.

So, when it's my turn to host Christmas dinner, I make prime rib. Everyone gets excited. My mother wants the rarest slice from the middle, and my father-in-law wants the end piece (they are diametrically opposite in almost every way but come together over a mutual love of beef). My 4-year-old daughter will even pause her assault on the breadbasket to eat some.

Feeding people a good meal has always given me a deep sense of joy. I put out a spread at every opportunity, and this special Christmas meal fills my heart far more than my stomach. (And that's saying something.)

I don't care how much it costs. I know not everyone has the budget to make that declaration, and yet American consumers vote for beef with their wallets every day at the grocery store. Americans are poised to consume more than 28 billion pounds of beef in 2025, or 58.5 pounds per person, according to USDA data from September. That's despite the average price of ground beef climbing above $6.25 per pound.

Some of it is sentimental attachment to different foods, but to millennial moms with families to feed, it's practical. Most of us want to feed our families nourishing food, and children are frustratingly picky. I will gladly spend $6.25 on a pound of ground beef because my 7-year-old loves tacos and hamburgers. It's less processed than chicken nuggets or hot dogs (of which he eats plenty), and I hope it will help bridge the gap to a more developed palate.

However, like many moms in my cohort, I elect to buy a half beef from a local farmer each year. On a price-per-pound basis, the beef is cheaper than the grocery store. I like knowing where my beef comes from, how it's raised and how it's processed, because I've been there to see it. I also like to support local businesses when I can.

These are values broadly shared among the nation's 30- to 45-year-olds, who represent a growing share of consumer spending power. While many are sensitive to the prices paid at the grocery store, they're more likely to ditch the bag of potato chips and soda, whose prices are comical compared to their nutritive value.

KATIE DEHLINGER

Importing beef from Argentina doesn't do it for this crowd. Millennials want quality and care where their food comes from. I've had many meaningful conversations about the beef production cycle with my peers—most of whom have no connection to agriculture—since President Donald Trump suggested increasing Argentine imports.

I explained that higher imports could, perhaps, lower prices at the grocery store in the short term, but in the long term, they could break the production cycle, force ranchers out of business, fuel further consolidation and push prices up. These outcomes are nonstarters for those of us who will be feeding teenagers a decade from now.

So, I will continue to serve prime rib for Christmas dinner. I will pay more for next year's cow, and I will keep sharing what it takes to bring beef to the dinner plate, so hopefully others vote for U.S. beef with wallets, too. ///

Your Gift to Yourself

BY Jennifer Campbell

KRISTIN LYKINS

Giving and donations don't always come with a receipt. It's not always a check written, a donation dropped off or sponsorship level listed on a program.

Sometimes, giving looks like keeping the flowers alive all summer, hauling tables, sweeping barn floors and constantly checking the weather for an outdoor event. Sometimes, it looks like opening your home, farm and heart to strangers for the sake of something bigger than yourself.

In September, we were blessed to host a "Harvest Dinner" for the Rural Gone Urban Foundation. We didn't donate money. We donated us—our farm, our home and our time. I can't tell you what a similar venue might have cost or what our contribution would be "worth" in dollars, because I don't care. What I can tell you is opening my home was given with a full heart.

Time is a gift. Energy is a gift. Letting people gather around your table (we hauled my kitchen table out into the yard for the event) and laugh in your space is a gift. And my hope is those gifts help as much as or more than dollars.

I forget sometimes that we all have something to offer, even if our checkbooks say otherwise. Maybe it's cooking, hosting, cleaning, showing up early, staying late, a hug or a text that's merely a simple heart emoji.

Our contribution may not have had a tax form attached, but it did come with important things: connections, purpose and a reminder that generosity doesn't have to be fancy or financial—it just needs to be genuine.

Time is precious, and sometimes it is easier just to write the check. But, the older I get, the more I understand the value of being present for others is a gift to me, as well. ///

Jennifer (Jent) Campbell captures life by word and camera from a seven-generation Indiana family farm. Find her blog at Farm Wife Feeds (**farmwifefeeds.com**). Follow her on social platform X **@plowwife**

Give the Gift of Time

BY Meredith Bernard

If the holiday gifting craze hasn't hit you yet, I'm sure it will soon enough. For me, it happens around Thanksgiving. Before the turkey and dressing have had time to digest, I'll find myself scrolling the interwebs for all the Black Friday deals I need to "add to cart."

This year is going to be a little different for me, though, because last year I made a change that I intend to carry through again (and again and again).

It started with concert tickets for my children as part of their Christmas gifts. While the package was small and not something they could enjoy immediately, I chose to spend money on memories instead. That purchase led to a full-fledged trip out west (the concert was at the famed Red Rocks pavilion in Colorado) and three of the best days we've ever had together, navigating national parks and putting 1,500 miles on a rented Jeep.

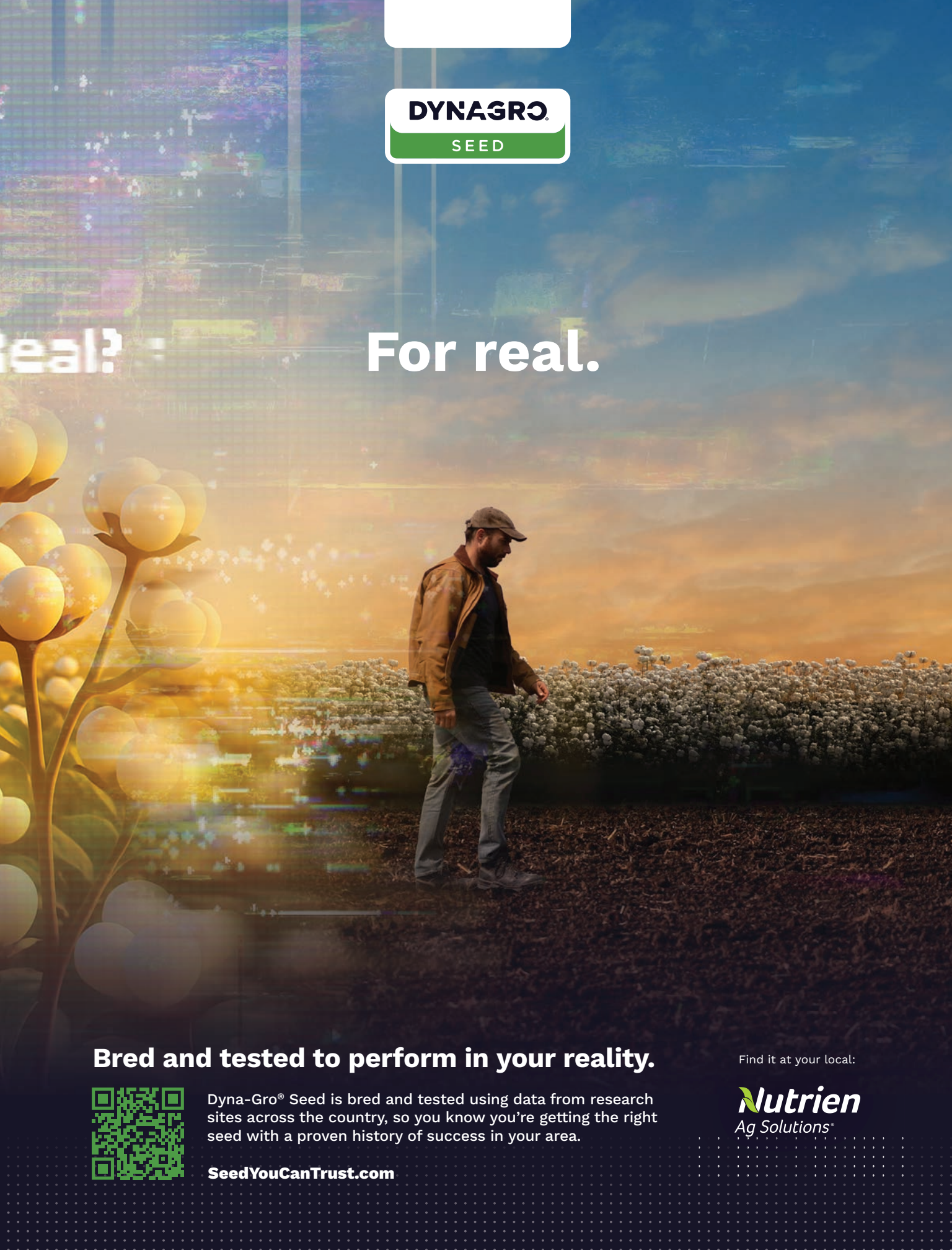
After that trip, we found our way to a few more summer soirees at places we'd never been and created more memories that could never hold a price tag. We made our way east to traverse sand dunes where the Wright brothers took their first flight and then headed west again to walk the halls of Graceland. More trips and experiences are now on our wish lists, even though it means fewer "gifts" under the tree.

MEREDITH BERNARD

This farm has given our family so many blessings over the years. But, I'd be remiss if I didn't admit that being tied to the land has sometimes been an excuse to avoid leaving it. Stepping beyond those self-imposed boundaries has bestowed opportunities for togetherness that let us create unique moments and lasting memories.

Sometimes, the best stuff in life isn't stuff at all. So, I'm giving myself and those around me the gift of time. Because, as we know, there's no time like the present. ///

Meredith Bernard plots her next adventure and tends to farm and family from North Carolina. Follow her on social media **@thisfarmwife** and visit her website at **thisfarmwife.com**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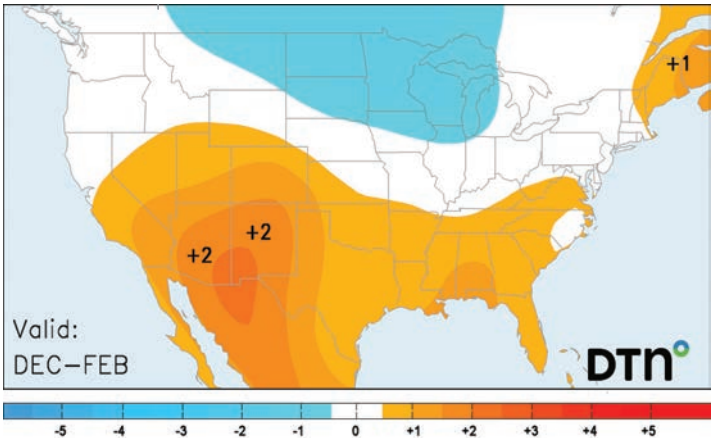
Short-Lived La Niña To Affect Winter Weather Forecast

Water in the Pacific Ocean cooled during the fall, and we are now in weak La Niña territory. However, models are very quick to return temperatures closer to normal, getting into a neutral state over the back half of winter. The earlier-developing event could mean some bursts of cold in December and January, but its relaxation in the second half of winter may lead to warmth returning late in the season, especially for those in the south and east. Otherwise, a typical La Niña pattern is in the forecast, with cooler conditions across the north, warmer and drier across the south and increased precipitation across the Ohio Valley and Pacific Northwest. That may only be the more frequent pattern, though. Expect a lot of variability this winter if history has anything to show us.



Early bursts of cold could happen in December and January, but warmth could return late in the season, especially for those in the south and east.
DTN GRAPHIC

Pacific Northwest (Idaho, Oregon and Washington): Drought built up during the summer, but fall brought early onsets of heavier rain that have helped to reduce it. That pattern is likely to continue for the front half of winter but could shift to being a little drier than normal late winter into spring.

Southwest: Though drought has been an issue seemingly for years now, tropical storm remnants and an overall active storm track has led to a reduction in the fall. While winter is the wettest time of the year, La Niña tends to favor a drier pattern over the season, and drought may expand with time.

Northern Plains: A variable weather pattern in the fall has limited drought development, and only sparse areas have had issues with that developing this season. The developing La Niña is forecast to produce some early shots of cold in December and January, and unfortunately for this region, that could extend all the way through the winter. However, in between bursts of cold, we could see some significant warmups, and January is favored. With an overall active storm track and colder temperatures, above-normal snowfall is favored but not guaranteed. The region needs a good snowpack for spring melting.

Central and Southern Plains: Drought has been flirting with the region all fall but has been unable to really take hold in a significant way, though November is likely to end up drier than normal. Soil moisture should still have been good enough for winter wheat establishment. But, the La Niña pattern is not favorable for an active storm track here this year, especially the farther south we get. Wide swings in temperature are in the forecast, as we could see several significant cold blasts intermingled with big warmups. This could lead to a few extra wintry weather systems with increased chances for an extra couple of snow and ice storms.

Coastal Texas and Louisiana: Fall precipitation has been lacking, and the tropics were unusually quiet this year, leading to some drought development. The forecast storm track is well north of the region this winter, which is expected to allow drought to grow throughout the season. A couple of colder blasts will be possible, but in general, a warmer and drier outlook is expected.

John Baranick
Ag Meteorologist

➤ Read John's blog at **ABOUT.DTNPF.COM/WEATHER**

➤ You may email John at **john.baranick@dtn.com**

Midwest: The end of summer and beginning of fall left the region in deep drought in some cases. Fall systems have been able to ease drought in some areas but not in others, leading to mixed conditions going into the winter. The onset of La Niña would favor a few early blasts of cold this season but would be followed by fewer later in the season that may affect mostly the northwest by the end of winter. That cold air could lead to enhanced lake-effect snow, and a storm track later in winter would favor the Ohio Valley with increased rainfall. That all may help the drought situation going into 2026.

Delta/Lower Mississippi Valley: Drought ebbed and flowed across the region during the fall, but the overall dryness here and farther north has led to more issues with transportation on the Mississippi River. Winter may be an early feature this year, with models suggesting front-loaded chances for cold and less likely to occur in February and beyond. Those cold shots could bring an enhanced risk of snow and ice this season, and a more active storm track in late winter could help put the drought concerns away for spring.

Mid-Atlantic and Northeast: Despite a somewhat active pattern, an overall lack of precipitation has caused drought to develop during the fall, especially in New England. La Niña tends to push the storm track through the area more times than not, which would increase the precipitation and chance to reduce drought. But, it also leads to fewer coastal systems that produce heavy snowfall events. In contrast, these storms usually bring colder air over the Great Lakes, enhancing snowfall across upstate New York, which may be more of a concern this winter. Like other areas of the country, shots of cold air may be front-loaded in December and January, being less likely in February.

Southeast: Despite some coastal and tropical storms, the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf of America) was relatively quiet this fall, which enabled drought to increase in many areas. Like much of the country, winter may be early this year, with shots of cold air in December and January more likely than February, when the waning La Niña may produce some warmer temperatures in the region. The storm track may be more active across the Tennessee Valley, which would help to reduce drought there. But, areas farther south and especially across Florida could be looking at drought expansion. ///

Story and Photos By **Dan Crummett**

Pasture Resurrection

Restoration program and rotational grazing transform worn-out pastures into lush, green hills.

It's sunrise in mid-July, and Terry Hodgson stands outside his 1-ton Chevy truck blowing a siren to gather 500 stocker heifers scattered over 200 acres of lush warm-season native grasses. There's still plenty of forage on the rolling hills interspersed between rough canyons, but Hodgson's not greedy. He knows the grass must rest despite the herd only spending a couple of days here. It's time to move.

For Hodgson, a retired 26-year Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee who began his career in Texas and then southern Kansas, the cattle are a harvest tool.

"For me, it's all about the management of the grass," he says of his northwest Oklahoma land that has been in his family for more than a century after his great-grandparents settled there. A sense of history runs deep on the Hodgson Ranch, with a limestone marker at the headquarters gate commemorating the four generations of the ranch's continuous cattle production.

The herd of 800-pound spayed heifers scrambles down a hillside road to the gate, collectively convinced of better rations in the next enclosure—one of a dozen similar crossfenced paddocks on Hodgson's primary 2,100-acre operation north of the small town of Freedom, Oklahoma. The ranch also includes an additional 600 acres some distance apart.

FORAGE PAYBACK

This year, abundant and timely rains fueled extraordinary forage growth. Thick stands of big and little bluestem, switchgrass and a growing population of Indiangrass showcase more than 15 years of Hodgson's concerted effort to resurrect the ranchland from nearly a century of selective, continuous grazing by his family's cow/calf operation.

"We're just now seeing ample evidence of significant improvements in species diversification," Hodgson explains, noting the prairie grasses have come back naturally with no reseeding.

"Primarily, we see more tallgrass species, which tells me we're on the right track," he adds. The desirable natives began returning with Hodgson's ultrahigh-density intensive-grazing management as increased hoof action from the higher animal densities stirred

the long-dormant natural prairie grass seed bank. Grazing today sees hundreds of thousands of pounds of animal density on the land for short periods in small paddocks compared with three to four animal units per acre grazing year-round over the entirety of the ranch during the cow/calf days.

In addition to improving the rangeland, this year's custom-grazed heifer herd averaged 2.1-pound-per-acre gains per day over 120 days when they shipped July 31, a rate generally thought very productive for steers grazing lush, early-season forages.

Stocker heifers graze canyon breaks where Terry Hodgson has been actively mowing to improve diversity of native range species.

Under Hodgson's management, the grass in each of his 150- to 200-acre paddocks gets roughly a month of rest before the herd returns to graze fresh growth. The stockers graze no more than three to four days on each paddock before rotating to fresh grass. By ending all grazing in late summer, the grasses have ample time to store carbohydrates before winter, he explains.

Hodgson's tools of choice to restore the grassland include intensive grazing along with timely occasional mowing to encourage pasture species diversification. While he's not against using controlled burns for brush control, primarily cedar, he chooses not to. Instead, he'd rather leave the carbon where it grows—sequestered in and beneath the paddocks, a stored resource to be marketed under future carbon credit trading.

Fourteen stock tanks and hard-surface watering areas were installed on the ranch in pastures that lacked surface water ponds.

"Since I retired in 2014, custom-grazed stockers have taken the place of cows and calves my parents used, and grazing has been confined to mainly April through August," Hodgson says, noting he returned to the ranch that year at the request of his parents, who wanted to retire and knew his knowledge of new methods of resource management could ensure the operation's survival.

"In recent years, August has been challenging because of drought," Hodgson says. "This year, we decided on an April 1 to July 31 grazing season, giving the grass 30 more days of recovery before frost."

Citing a severe lack of qualified and motivated labor, Hodgson developed his business plan around his own labor and that of part-time help when it's available. He has successfully, and profitably, been leasing his pastures on a per-head per-day basis for 12 years. "After July 31 this year, I'm a free man until next spring, barring any improvements and upkeep that might be needed," he says with a laugh. "And, my dream of restoring these hills to their native state just keeps coming true. Plus, I don't have the risk of owning my own cattle."

Hodgson's agronomy degree and more than a quarter-century facilitating educational programs and field days with NRCS and the nine-county South Central Kansas Residue Alliance have equipped him well to manage his "guest" herds. The potential gains on Hodgson's pastures provide an attractive proposition for those seeking summer grazing, and almost daily close encounters with the herds at each rotation gives him a chance to catch and treat the sick ones. This year proved a busy one for treating foot rot problems caused by frequent wet conditions, he explains.

ENTER WHIP

Before Hodgson took over management of the property in 2014, he was instrumental in managing the land's upgrades for his parents with a USDA-NRCS ➤

A 100-plus-year-old spring-fed reservoir (above) supplies Terry Hodgson's ranch watering system and related fiberglass stock tanks. A pressure-sensitive pumping system in a nearby "well house" (right) feeds all but the highest elevation pastures, which are fed with an additional booster pump.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) project that ultimately made his business plan viable.

"From 2009 to 2014, we mechanically removed roughly 300 acres of eastern red cedars from the property, which freed up many acres of grass production in all but the canyons," he explains. They installed more than 8 miles of underground plastic pipe and 14 rigid fiberglass stock tanks in pastures that lacked surface water ponds or solar-pump systems. And, they crossfenced the ranch into the 12 main pastures that are now being grazed.

The water system draws from a more-than-century-old spring-fed reservoir and supplies the water tanks in 12 pastures through 2-inch main lines. Pastures at the high end of the ranch, 200 feet above the spring, are automatically fed by a high-pressure booster pump controlled with a pressure-sensitive switch.

GROWTH AND MAINTENANCE

Although Hodgson doesn't practice controlled burning, he says because of the thoroughness of the original mechanical cedar eradication project, he's seen little re-encroachment of cedars.

"I do keep an eye on the pastures and try to keep lighter-grazed areas mowed to even up forage production," he says. "In one pasture, I had a dominant stand of little bluestem, and after mowing it, I've found an increasing number of additional tallgrass species emerging to provide cattle a much better grazing choice."

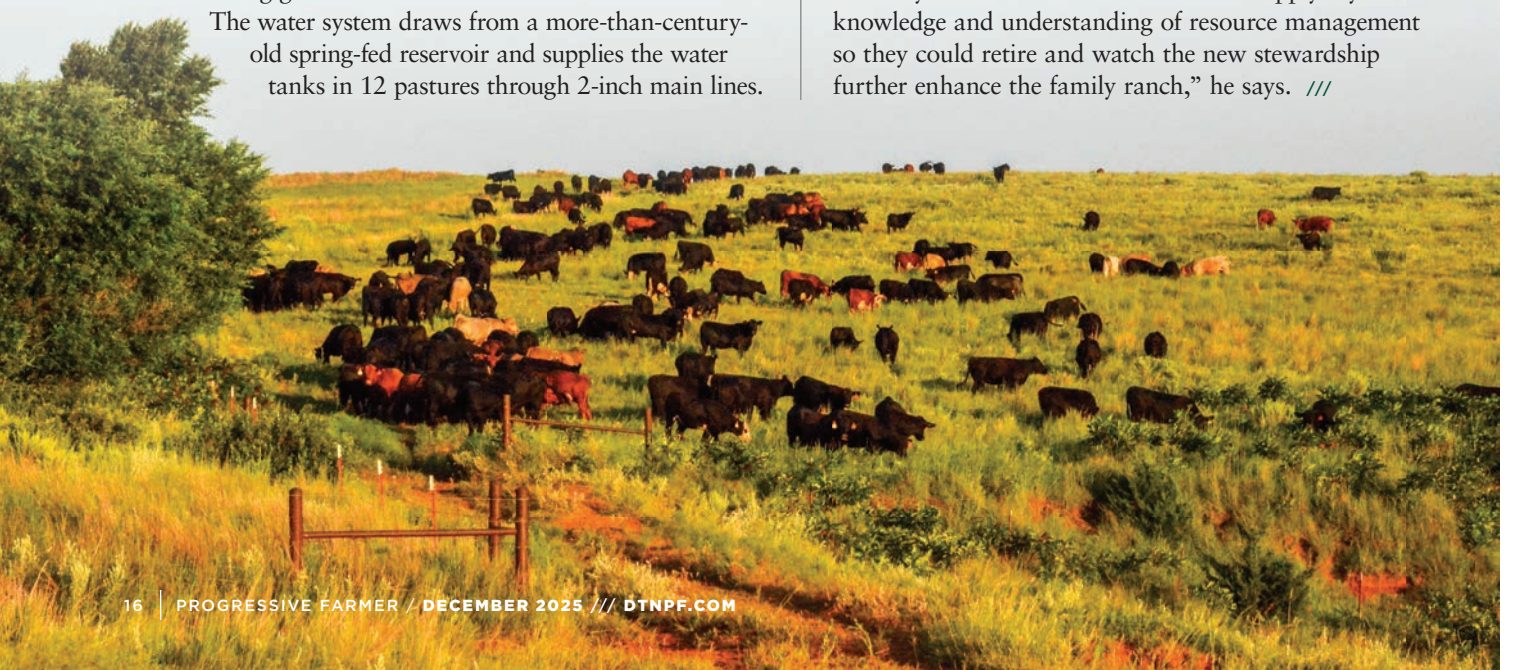
The many steep-sided canyons lacing their way through the ranch topography remain havens for hardwoods, cedars and brush species such as smooth sumac and sand plums.

"I've already contracted a spring-applied aerial application of a brush mix of chemicals for those brush-infested areas," Hodgson explains. "Like I said, I don't want to burn because I just don't see releasing all that carbon into the atmosphere. I figure my mowing and judicious aerial spraying at about $20 per acre compete well with the cost of burning."

While Hodgson's methods are different from his forebears on the land, looking out over the green-covered hills and working with slick, fast-gaining stockers every day, he says he's confident his grandparents would be proud.

And, looking back at the time he's been managing the ranch for the family, despite several years of very dry conditions in western Oklahoma, Hodgson says he's also fulfilled the wishes of his parents.

"They wanted me to come home and apply my knowledge and understanding of resource management so they could retire and watch the new stewardship further enhance the family ranch," he says. ///



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BAYER

By **Pamela Smith**, @PamSmithDTN
Photos By **Jason Jenkins**

Tara Barrett-Duzan consults the combine operator's manual ahead of harvest.

From Tragedy to Legacy

Farmer's daughter urges others to plan for the unexpected.

As a local television news anchor, Tara Barrett-Duzan was building a successful career sharing stories of both tragedy and triumph. Becoming a full-time farmer wasn't in the career plan—until tragedy struck and life deviated from the script.

A 90-minute documentary film released earlier this year called "The Farmer's Daughter" digs into the roots of her determination to keep the Hume, Illinois, farm in the family after the passing of her brother and father.

Her story of trading the news desk for a tractor seat is one of resilience. But, Barrett-Duzan will be the first to say that it is also a cautionary tale about the need to talk about the "what-ifs" and plan for the unthinkable.

"Tomorrow isn't promised. 'Do it today' is something many of us say, but we tend to avoid the planning to deal with the day-to-day," Barrett-Duzan says. "There's no way to remove all the drama of those emotional moments, but it sure would have helped if we had talked more about the future."

TIME TO TALK

The story begins in 2009 when her brother, Cory Barrett, died in a motorcycle accident on the very day he was scheduled to begin farming full time. In 2011, her father, Ron Barrett, surprised his daughter by asking if she'd consider coming back to join the farm operation. The opportunity meant more time with family and a way to juggle new motherhood.

"I grew up on the farm and thought I knew what it meant to be a farmer. And, I worked hard during

the first years after coming home, but I was still mostly a helper," she says. "Dad kept suggesting I needed to learn some of the deeper aspects of the business. I kept waiving him off and saying we had plenty of time for that. But we didn't."

In 2018, Ron was diagnosed with cancer and was gone within six months.

"I remember being at the hospital during some of his last days and trying to fill in a few of the business details. Fortunately, Dad was meticulous about his recordkeeping," Barrett-Duzan says.

"I have often thought back to times when he said he was heading into the office, and I joked about him 'not working,'" she recalls. "Turns out he was doing the most important job on the farm."

Cory and Ron Barrett's graves (above) are adjacent to a field that Barrett-Duzan still farms today. Tara (below) greases the combine ahead of harvest.

BUILD A RED FILE

Ethan Smith, a farm family business adviser with Pinion, says many families overlook a powerful planning tool he calls the "red file." This curated collection of essential documents is designed to help guide family or business partners through the process of settling affairs.

"It's not just about documents, passwords or wishes. It's about providing clarity and reducing stress. It's about making sure business and legacy wishes are honored," Smith says.

This information could include unique documents and instructions that reflect the business, such as a copy of a will or trust documents, buy-sell agreements, succession plans, insurance information, account numbers, lists of assets (land, equipment, business holdings), passwords and personal notes or letters to family members.

Barrett-Duzan found her father's list of trusted people vital. "I leaned into those people, especially in those early days," she explains. "Still, there are so many details he took with him that never made it into writing."

LEARNING THE ROPES

Questions about what would happen to the farm came as early as her father's visitation. She was on the phone the following day informing three bank managers that she intended to continue farming the 1,400-acre enterprise. The family owns 80 acres, but the remaining is cash rented or leased.

Returning home wasn't an obligation as much as a resolve. "My son wants to farm like his grandfather. I'd like to give him that chance," she says.

Barrett-Duzan called on Stephanie Bowyer, at ADM Grain, in Hume, to help her understand the basics of grain marketing. "Tara is unique because she isn't afraid to ask questions and to study to learn what she needs to know," Bowyer says.

Nutrien Ag Solutions crop consultant Matt Morris helps Barrett-Duzan work through the agronomic side of the business. ➤

"Tara is always intent on learning the chemistry and 'why' behind what we are doing," Morris says. "She's done a good job of keeping the foundation of what she learned from her dad, but she's not stuck in the rut of always following that."

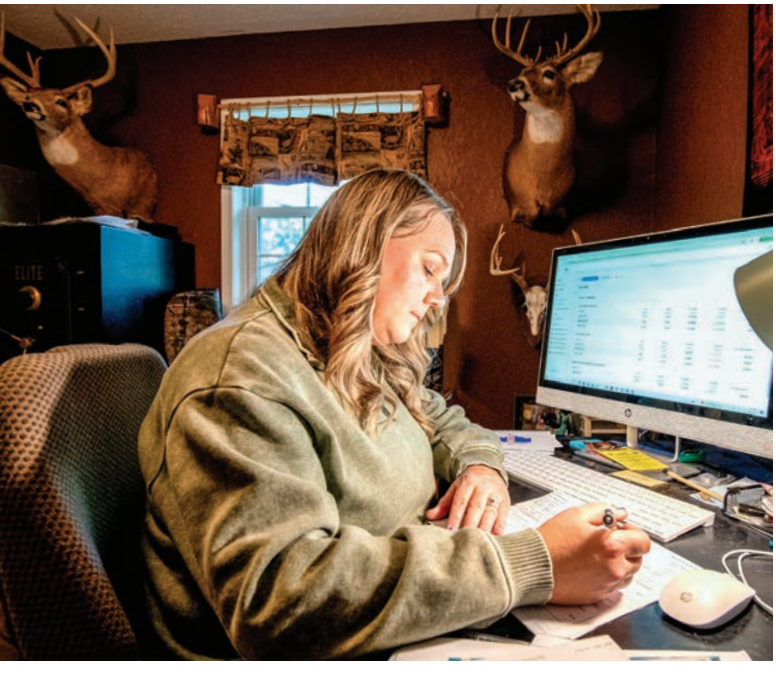
Journalistic tendencies to probe for answers run deep, Barrett-Duzan agrees. "I may be the only one ever to read a John Deere combine manual," she says.

"But, I've also benefited from people like my mom who believed in me. I watched her go back to school at age 40 to become a nurse. She showed me what is possible if you want it bad enough," she adds.

Her husband, Jared Duzan, came back to farm full time in recent years. However, this fall, the farm encountered another setback when a 320-acre parcel that had been farmed by the family for nearly five decades was sold and leased to another farmer.

"We love this land, even if it isn't ours. It hurts to think we won't be farming it again," Barrett-Duzan says. "But, in the back of my mind, I can hear Dad telling me to put my head down and figure it out."

Jared and Tara Duzan (above) carry on the family's farming legacy along with their children, Colton and Callie. Tara (below) tends to farm paperwork. Her office chair was fashioned from the seat of her father's combine.



TIPS FOR SURVIVAL

The amount of paperwork, phone calls and changes that come with a quick transition of a business is enormous, she notes.

"Having a plan in place doesn't take away the work, but it will help you feel more confident about what to do and how to do it. That's especially true if you are also dealing with grief," Barrett-Duzan observes.

She encourages young farmers to learn about all daily farm operations, not just those in the field. Get exposure to crop insurance, grain marketing and seed selection, and meet the people such as landowners, farm managers, accountants and input suppliers.

That requires elders to give the younger generation an opportunity to learn and have skin in the game, she adds.

"Have the conversations. Take notes on what the hopes are for the future and talk about contingencies if things don't go as planned," Barrett-Duzan says. ///

Editor's Note: "*The Farmer's Daughter" documentary, directed by Scot England, is available to rent or purchase from Amazon Prime Video and free on Tubi TV* (**https://tubitv.com/movies/100043576/the-farmer-s-daughter**)

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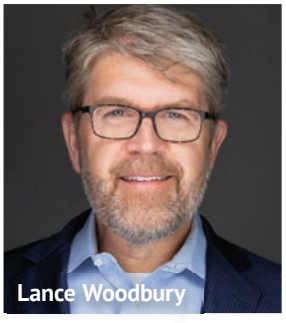
By Katie Dehlinger, @KatieD_DTN

Hidden Benefits

A compensation plan lifts the veil on living expenses for the farm family business.

Farm families are having tough financial conversations this winter, but Lance Woodbury suspects one topic not being discussed is family living expenses.

"We tend to focus on where the big dollars are," says the Pinion Global family business consultant and columnist for DTN/*Progressive Farmer*. The expense of family living may pale in comparison to the price tag on a new combine, but when several families are living out of the business, that number becomes harder to ignore. It can also become more contentious, he says.


Lance Woodbury

The University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management says sole-proprietor farms spent $74,078 on family living expenses in 2024. While that's 5% lower than the previous year largely because of cutbacks in household repairs, recreation, gifts and "miscellaneous," it's still higher than the state's average net farm income of $67,890.

"A lot of our family expenses get buried in the business," Woodbury says. When the farm provides housing and transportation for key employees, which are also often owners, it can deduct those expenses from its taxes, but it "works against having an easy conversation about what we're living on."

DON'T ACT LIKE FAMILY BUSINESS

As farmers review their year-end financials and prepare for another year of narrow to negative profit margins, Woodbury encourages farmers to think about what they'd do if they weren't a family-run business.

"People don't really have a separate and distinct conversation in the management circle about what are we going to pay, and then it gets clouded up by discussions about what can the business afford," he says. "The reality of it is, if you were not in an ag family business, and the business can't afford it, you would lay people off."

Rather than firing family, most ag businesses elect to cut costs, reduce pay or put the remainder of what's needed on the operating note. Those strategies can lead to resentment and misunderstandings, Woodbury explains, especially when they're not communicated clearly.

Creating a formal compensation plan can not only help put the value of nontaxable benefits into perspective but can also help the business identify areas of additional savings. "Sometimes, to be a good family business, don't act like one," he says.

CREATE A COMPENSATION PLAN

Dick Wittman, an Idaho farmer who has been consulting on farm finances for nearly 50 years, says most farms take advantage of tax-efficient compensation strategies but don't realize how "many of the hidden benefits that are furnished by the farm are truly compensation." One of the first tools he created in his consulting career was a compensation spreadsheet that quantifies the tax-deductible benefits as well as the hourly wage or salary of the employee. (Scan the QR code to access it.)

Scan For Worksheet

https://tinyurl.com/3ds4227s

"A lot of people think they're only taking $30,000 a year out of the business, but they're really drawing $60,000 or $70,000 compensation packages if they look at what they would have to make off-farm," he explains.

Wittman suggests starting with a market-based assessment of what a similar role would pay or what the farm would need to pay if it had to hire a nonfamily member to do the job. Once you've developed the total level of compensation, you can work backward through the benefits offered.

"Farmers have tremendous flexibility to do a cafeteria plan, because everyone coming to you has a different set of circumstances," he says. If the manager gets insurance through his spouse's off-farm job, or a manager has a horse that's boarded and fed by the farm, for example, that benefit could be offset somewhere else in the compensation package.

"Once people quantify where they are, then they can start looking at where the inequities are," he says, adding that it's a valuable tool to address concerns about fairness.

SEPARATE RETURNS

Wittman says most farm businesses he's worked with struggle to delineate between what counts as a return to labor and management, and what's a return to the ownership of the business.

JIM PATRICO

"It's really important to have a policy that says we're going to pay a fair, competitive wage first, and then the money that is made in the business over and above compensation, it belongs to the owners and the shares of ownership they have," he says. That eliminates the temptation of giving large pay increases or bonuses in highly profitable years only to reverse course and pull back when the market changes.

Clear compensation plans can also help bring the next generation on board, especially for third- or fourth-generation operations that have cousins working together.

EXPENSE AND REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Both Wittman and Woodbury agree on establishing a clear expense and reimbursement policy.

"It's not easy to get there because everybody's buried their stuff in different parts of the business," Woodbury says. "That Amazon purchase I made on the business's credit card—was it really for the business? If it's personal, we tend to just throw it in the category of maintenance and repairs or office supplies."

One farm he works with has a weekly meeting to review expenses, and each person who submitted an invoice must defend the purchase. While that may not be a perfect option for all farms, "If you've got to defend it to other people, it makes you pay attention to what you're spending," Woodbury says.

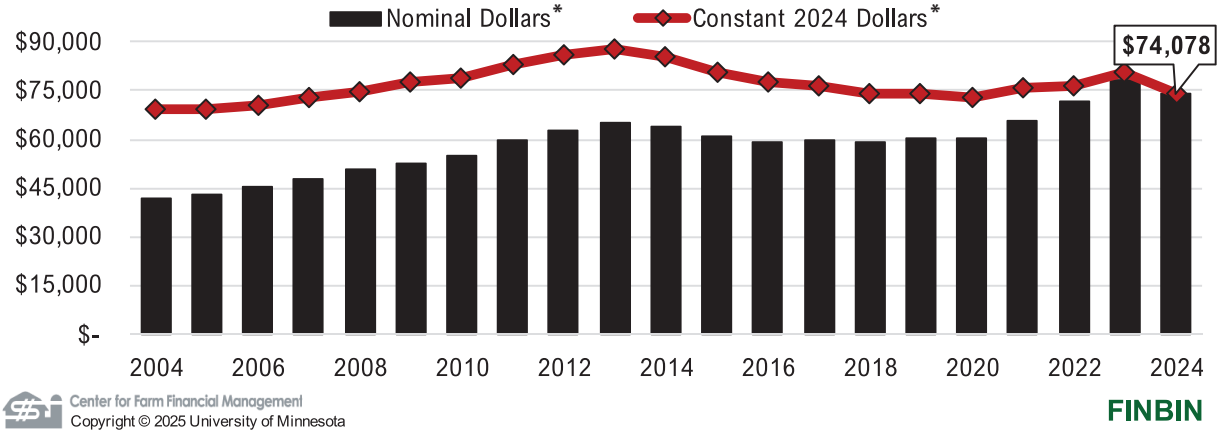
Wittman says every farm needs a clear policy on what expenses go on the company charge card as well as a consistent, predictable reimbursement policy.

These conversations can be hard, Woodbury says. He suggests having a designated family meeting—not on Christmas or part of the family's holiday plans—to discuss what expenses are allotted to the business and what needs to be paid for out of individuals' pockets.

"Your accountant and lender can be wonderful resources in that conversation," he says. "They're usually financial wizards. Use them." ///

Family Living Expense

Data: Minnesota Average, Only includes sole proprietors who kept detailed family living records



* Nominal dollars refers to the face value of money at a given time, while 2024 dollars adjusts for inflation. The difference shows changes in purchasing power over time.

CHART SOURCE: CENTER FOR FARM FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Story and Photos By **Dan Miller**, @DMillerPF

America's Best Shops

The Second Chance

A tornado gives this family farm another opportunity to build the right shop for their operation.

Sometimes you get a do-over. In 2019, a tornado crossed paths with Capital K Farms Inc., outside of Cozad, Nebraska. No one was hurt, but the cold-storage end of the farm's shop complex was demolished.

COURTESY OF CAPITAL K FARMS

"We were lucky enough to be able to keep the heated side, and we had a second chance to redo our cold storage," says Justin Kinnan, who, with his wife, Sheena, operate the conventional and organic crop farm in western Nebraska. The farm produces corn, soybeans and alfalfa. About half the corn is a food-grade crop sold to FritoLay.

Justin and Sheena Kinnan

The cold-storage piece had been 100 feet long x 80 feet wide. "Even before the tornado, we realized we were already out of storage, and getting more equipment to do organic [crops], we needed more space," he says. Rebuilding, the Kinnans added 90 additional feet. The new shop structure, end to end, became 300 feet long x 80 feet wide—cold storage accounts for 190 feet.

"Our equipment is expensive, so we want it all inside. And, with cultivators and burners, and all the equipment it takes to do organic crops, we needed more space," Kinnan says. (*Read about the Kinnan's Big Burn implement, built through their KinnanFAB business, on page 28.*)

The Kinnans added 90 feet to their cold storage spaces after a tornado partially destroyed the building (above, right). It has proven to be useful cover to store the wide variety of equipment they use to produce organic crops.

MAIN SHOP

The main shop area, heated and air-conditioned, is 80- x 110-feet. The highly polished floor is easy to clean (by broom or with a large floor scrubber stored nearby) and reflects light produced by banks of LEDs above. "It's pretty bright in here," Kinnan says. "We probably went a hair overkill. But, we wanted it bright in here for work."

The sidewalls of the finished shop space are 21 feet tall, covered with white steel, reflective of overhead lighting. A pair of 18- x 35-feet overhead doors—at one end of the shop, the other opening to the front—allow for good traffic flow through the building. "We put overhead doors in instead of airplane doors, so we didn't have to deal with something parked in front of them. Overheads are simpler for our operation," Kinnan explains.

HEAT AND AIR

The shop is heated by propane and cooled with a 15-ton air-conditioning unit. Warmed and cooled air is delivered to the shop through a U-shaped duct system mounted to the ceiling.

A full cabinet of swing-out drawers gives easy access to even the farthest back spaces of the drawers.

Watch The Video

tinyurl.com/5ewuk5bm DTN

COURTESY OF CAPITAL K FARMS

Kinnan installed welding plugs by both doors and about every 50 feet elsewhere in the building. He put 110-volt outlets every 10 feet along the walls.

Compressed air is delivered by way of a loop of metal piping mounted around the top of the shop walls. The compressor is housed in a heated room built at the far end of the cold-storage building. This provides great noise control, Kinnan says. Compressed air drops are mounted by each door and then every 25 to 30 feet around the shop.

EXTERIOR APRONS

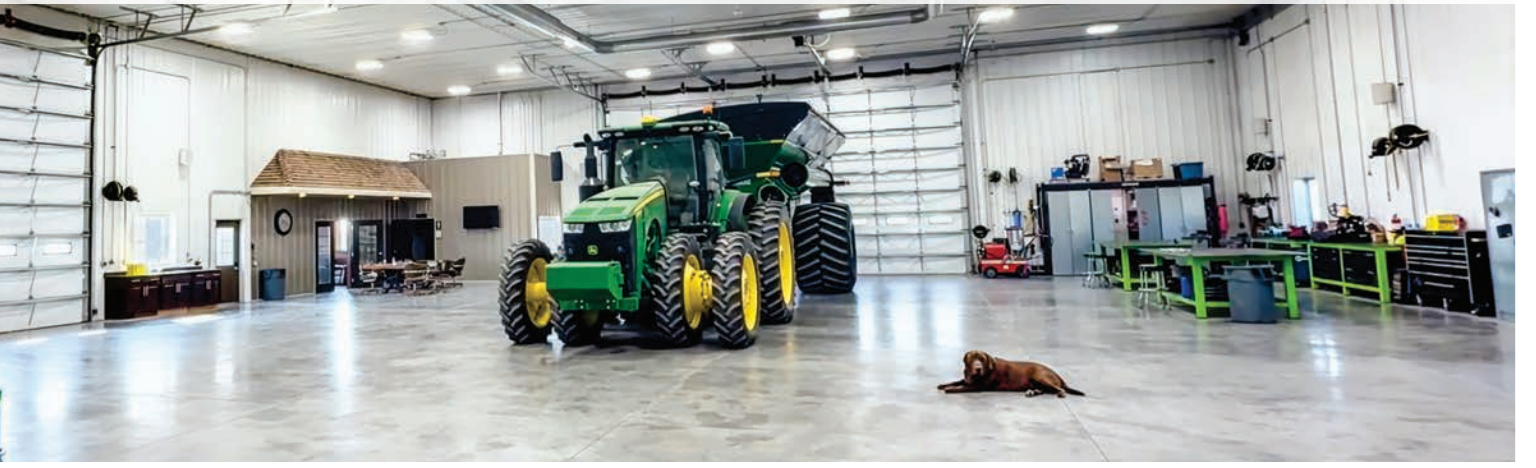
Outside, Kinnan poured 40-foot concrete aprons. Kinnan also laid down a heavy layer of rock around the entire building for easy entry and exit of large vehicles, and for moving equipment without obstruction.

In one corner of the shop are two large, 5- x 10-foot welding benches, the tops 1-inch thick, both with heavy-duty vices and storage spaces below. Along one wall, a pair of steel cabinets with steel tops boast novel swing-out drawers.

UNIQUE STORAGE

Finishing the workspace is a row of Levracks—modular, high-density storage units made in Seward, Nebraska. Blending pallet racking with mobile shelving, they offer ample storage space when open and a clean, secure look when closed. "I'd like to have more of these," Kinnan says.

The shop includes a 20- x 20-foot break room. It is space built on the outside of the shop, not occupying an inside corner. It has a kitchen-like look with refrigerator, microwave, sink, cabinets and countertops. A large table and chairs occupy the center of the room. A TV and a pair of recliners make the space comfortable on game day. A mini split system cools and warms the space. "If you put this inside, you're probably going to lose 30 feet of shop space in the corner," Kinnan says. ➤



A compressed air reel is mounted to an outside bollard. Levracks provide high-density storage. A 20- x 20-foot office was built as an outside extension of the shop to preserve workspace inside. A pair of 5- x 10-foot welding tables with 1-inch tops provide repair space.

Three Great Design Tips

1 Kinnan installed 15 tons of air-conditioning. It's a good amount of cool. "But, we can open a door on a 90-degree day and recover pretty fast."

2 Kinnan made good use for one of the bollards outside (see far photo, right). With a simple bracket and heavy bolt, nut and washer, he designed a mount for a compressed air reel and tools.

3 The compressor is 300 feet away from the service door most used by the Kinnans. Justin installed a compressor kill switch just above that door. When that switch is turned off, the compressor is off.

Three 'Should Have Dones'

1 Traffic flow inside the shop would have been improved with an additional 10x12 overhead door. It would have provided quick access to interior spaces.

2 The hose on a compressed air reel reaches 50 feet. However, the shop is 80 feet wide. "That's something we've had to learn the hard way," Kinnan says. Additional reels were installed.

3 This shop has a single floor drain. Looking back, Kinnan would have installed trench drains by each door to capture wash water and melting snow. ➤

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Pigweeds (10 Locations): CPFD; (HBI008A4-2022US): (N=11 TX, KS, NC, TN, MI, IA, OK, IN-1, IL-c, IL-s); 2022

All photos are either the property of Syngenta or are used with permission.

Watch The Video
tinyurl.com/6wp86zeb DTN

New Home To Grow

The farm shop built by Justin and Sheena Kinnan, outside Cozad, Nebraska, always performed double duty. It was outfitted for the farm, but it also provided space for the couple's growing fabrication business, KinnanFAB.

Beginning about eight years ago, what would become KinnanFAB's first product rolled out the farm shop door. It was a stalk roller, built to be mounted on the front of a tractor, giving protection to tires in no-till fields.

Justin and Sheena Kinnan

Need for Space

"I built my first stock roller ever with a torch and a [magnetic] drill, and that was not fun," Justin says. "So, I bought a plasma table, and then we started designing a few things, and it's kind of all escalated into this, and here we are."

Where we are is the home base for KinnanFAB. Built in 2023, it is the modern center for stalk roller production, as well as the newly launched Big Burn, a weed burner, and new tillage tools—with more to come.

KinnanFAB occupies a building 60 feet wide and 100 feet long. It has a 16-foot ceiling and a pair of 14- x 24-foot overhead doors. It sits on 2 acres in town, with room for expansion.

The building has a ventilated paint booth and a high-definition plasma cutter, bringing to the shop a precise computer numerical control (CNC) process for cutting steel. The table can pierce 2 inches of steel and cut through 4 inches. The Kinnans recently added a computer-controlled, 250-ton CNC press brake to make precise bends and shapes from sheet metal, such as the burner shields.

The Big Burn

The Big Burn (see photo, below) was born out of experience in the Kinnans' organic fields. "We struggled with other burners, so we designed our own," Justin explains. "We're flaming roughly 8 inches on each side of the corn. And, our goal is to try to keep the band clean where cultivators or mechanical tillage cannot reach," he adds.

COURTESY OF KINNANFAB

This shop gives the Kinnans a place to expand—even the incentive to expand. "We would have never had the ability to put in these pieces of equipment that we're needing," Justin says.

New Markets

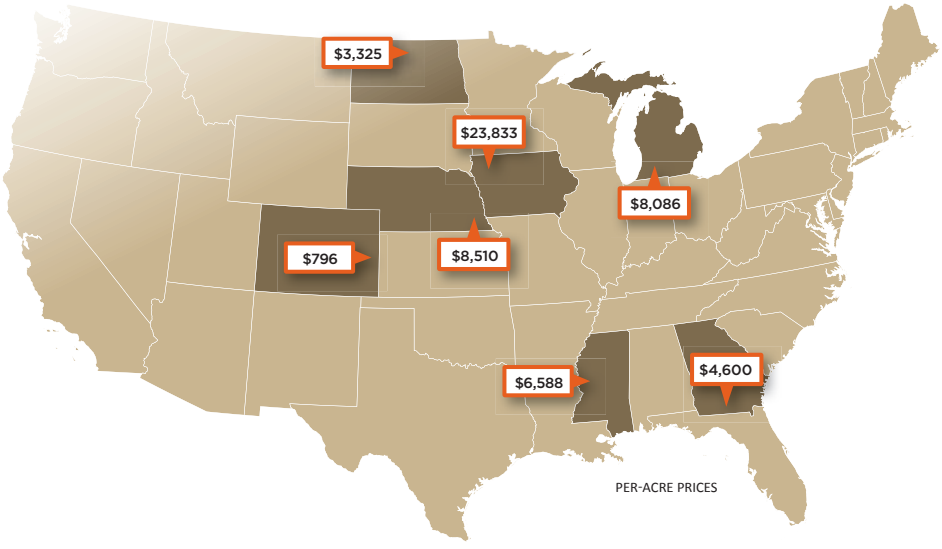
The shop creates new marketing opportunities, Sheena explains. KinnanFAB has had sales in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. With the Big Burn about to be launched, she believes there are market opportunities well beyond the Midwest.

It will be her job to make that happen. Sheena is office manager for the farm and fabrication business. She also is the marketing manager. Social media is important to their expansion plans, she says, especially in a time when machinery is a tough sell.

"Farmers are an interesting market to advertise to," she says. "But, we have a connection with farmers, because we farm, too. We do a lot of social media with X, that's been probably one of the biggest outlets for us in the ag community; and then we do Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram."

On all social media, Sheena is convinced the best way to reach buyers is to tell their story. "People want to know your story. It's more of a personal touch. Social media that just highlights your product, I don't think does very well. People respond to those organic postings; they want to see what you're up to." ///

Recent Farmland Sales



COLORADO, Cheyenne County. Thirteen tracts of land totaling 5,275 acres sold at auction for $4.2 million, or an average of $796 per acre. The property was a mix of grass (1,374 acres), cropland (3,250 acres) and CRP (633 acres), and prices ranged from $600 to $1,250 per acre. All the grass acres were sold as part of a larger 1,410-acre tract that also included a three-bedroom farmhouse, two 40- x 100-foot machinery sheds and a variety of grain bins and fuel storage. **Contact:** Darvin Meurisse or Gail Harvey, Farm and Ranch Realty Inc.; frr@frrmail.com, 800-247-7863
www.farmandranchrealty.com

GEORGIA, Brooks County. A 170-acre farm sold at auction for $782,000, or $4,600 per acre. The former cattle farm includes cropland, timber and hunting potential. Seventy acres are suitable for row crops, and 40 acres were used for peanut production in 2025. The farm includes two septic tanks, a 50- x 100-foot metal shed and a road system throughout. **Contact:** Russ Beckham, Merit Auctions; info@meritauctions.com, 229-221-1608
https://meritauctions.com

IOWA, Sioux County. A 120-acre farm sold in two tracts for $2.86 million, or an average of $23,833 per acre. The first farm—an 80-acre tract boasting ½-mile rows and CSR2 of 94.5—sold for $26,500 per acre. The second tract totaled 40 acres with about 30 acres in crop production and the remainder in grassland that's currently cut for hay. It sold for $18,500 per acre. **Contact:** Mark Zomer, Zomer Co.; info@zomercompany.com, 712-476-9443
https://zomer.nextlot.com

MICHIGAN, Berrien County. A contiguous 100-acre farm containing crop, residential and recreational land sold in 11 tracts at auction for $808,550, or an average of $8,086 per acre. The first three tracts—all 2 to 3 tillable acres in size—sold for an average of $15,450 per acre. Tracts 4 through 8, which included nearly 30 total tillable acres, sold for $7,562 per acre. The 18-acre ninth tract sold for $8,869 per acre, while tracts 10 and 11 sold for $6,474 per acre. They included a higher percentage of wooded properties. **Contact:** Ed Boyer or Ted Boyer, Schrader Real Estate and Auction Co. Inc.; auctions@schraderauction.com, 800-451-2709
www.schraderauction.com

MISSISSIPPI, Humphreys County. A row-crop farm totaling 2,152.51 acres sold for $14.18 million, with an average price per tillable acre of $6,588. The farm was made up of Class 1 and 2 soils and was irrigated by five center pivots, with the remaining acreage dryland and leveled to water down the row. Water, drainage and yields were considered excellent. **Contact:** Drew Burton, Agriworld Farm Investments; d.burton@agri-world.com, 870-265-3276
https://agriworldinc.com/

NEBRASKA, Richardson County. A farm that's been in the same family for more than 40 years sold for $2.17 million, or $8,510 per acre. The 255-acre farm includes 204 crop acres that have been in a consistent corn/soybean rotation. It's also close to several grain-delivery points. **Contact:** Ryan Sadler or Jacob Meybrunn, Farmers National Co.; rsadler@farmersnational.com or jmeybrunn@farmersnational.com, 712-371-9873 or 402-921-9620
https://www.farmersnational.com/

NORTH DAKOTA, Bottineau County. A 158-acre farm sold via online auction for $525,350, or $3,325 per acre. A strip of grass traverses the property, providing some hunting opportunities, resulting in 136 acres for crop production. The property is six miles from the nearest elevator. **Contact:** Martin Peterson, Steffes Group; martin.peterson@steffesgroup.com, 320-905-5325
https://steffesgroup.com/

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

Submit recent land sales to **landwatch@dtn.com**

Find previous Landwatch listings at **www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/magazine/your-land**

Supporting Generational Transitions

Business transitions between generations can be challenging. Not only are there distinctive perspectives and communication styles—think "boomers" versus "millennials"—the senior and younger generations bring different strengths to the table. While these strengths can be complementary, they are also diverse enough to pose problems.

Members of the senior generation have decades of wisdom gleaned from experience. They know what works and what doesn't, where problems might lie and the shortcuts and workarounds to difficult farming or ranching conditions that can emerge every few years. They've dealt with employees, vendors and landowners on a recurring basis. As the old saying goes, "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment."

JIM PATRICO

The younger generation brings energy and creativity, fresh ideas and the ability to work long hours. They often have more native instincts with technology and adapt quickly to change. They bring what psychologist Raymond Cattell called "fluid intelligence," the ability to learn, reason and solve problems. The senior generation has more "crystallized intelligence," which uses accumulated wisdom and knowledge to accomplish tasks.

Problems arise in how these strengths emerge in the workplace. If the senior generation moves too quickly to solve every challenge, the younger generation can feel stifled, sensing a lack of confidence from the senior generation. But, if the younger generation doesn't move quickly enough to fix what the older generation clearly sees, or if they don't ask for the senior generation's input, the older generation feels frustrated and not respected for their knowledge.

Here are a few strategies to balance the high-quality input of the senior generation with the emerging confidence of the younger generation.

Give the younger generation space to solve problems. Take a vacation, leave for periods of time to travel or visit friends, and generally remove yourself from the operation at regular intervals so you don't have to watch the younger generation solve problems and be tempted to step in.

Don't correct every mistake you see. I once heard this described as only getting involved in a management decision if something is "going off the rails." Otherwise, hold back from corrective behavior. They need to learn from their mistakes.

Separate your financial interests. If all your income is dependent on the performance of the farm, it is harder to step away from operational decisions. Use land or machinery rent, and retirement funds for living expenses instead of a salary or profit distributions.

For the younger generation, here are some ideas you can use to foster the success of the senior generation's transition.

State clearly where you would like the senior generation's help. While it can be hard to "boss" family members who are older than you, it is important to focus their energy on where they can be the most helpful, so they don't step on your toes or cause friction in the operation. Tell them where they are needed. Ask them to participate in specific discussions.

Ask the senior generation to teach, document or share what they know. What do they know that you may not fully grasp? Request they focus on teaching in those areas. One family I know approached its father's skills and knowledge about irrigation to teach better water management on rice fields.

Encourage off-farm activities. Ask them to spend time with grandkids. Encourage them to volunteer, serve on local or industry boards, or spend time with friends. Ask them to write about their history or document their life story. These activities focus one's sights beyond work or material interests, providing a sense of purpose later in life.

For the senior generation, making a transition out of the business they've grown over decades only happens once. Discuss strategies both generations can use to help your family business during this important period. ///

Email Lance Woodbury at
lance.woodbury@pinionglobal.com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JENNIFER CARRICO

Avoid Postcalving Paralysis

Email Dr. Ken McMillan at ***vet@dtn.com***

Q We had to pull a calf from a first-calf heifer, and she ended up paralyzed. We worked with her for several days, but it looked like she just gave up and quit eating and drinking, and we had to put her down. What can we do to avoid this from happening again?

A DR. McMILLAN: Good heifer development is critical to avoid these issues and, more importantly, for profitability. Traditionally, it has been recommended that heifers should be at least 60 to 65% of their mature weight at breeding and 85 to 90% at calving. However, some recent studies have shown that numbers as low as 50% can lead to acceptable performance as long as they are developed to reach their target weight at calving.

In any case, I like them in body condition score 6 at calving. This is the "Goldilocks" zone; not too skinny but certainly not too fat. Both can be an issue. In fact, too heavy may be worse because of fat laid down in the birth canal and too many calories that can lead to larger calves. Meanwhile, skinny heifers may not have the reserve energy to deliver a healthy, vigorous calf, produce adequate high-quality colostrum, breed back and wean a calf.

Pelvic measurements can help assist in your culling decisions. About 30 days before breeding, your veterinarian can use a special tool to assess the size of the birth canal. An additional benefit is your veterinarian can perform a reproductive tract evaluation to make sure heifers are ready to breed at that time, too. Heifers with small pelvic measurements and immature reproductive tracts should not be retained for breeding.

Next, focus on bull selection. Don't just focus on bulls with low birthweights. A better tool is the calving ease direct (CED) expected progeny differences (EPD). This EPD incorporates birthweight and the calving ease scores that seed stock producers report. Phenotypic observation can also be a good tool in bull selection, so don't just focus on EPDs. Remember, the "E" in EPD is for expected. The leading cause of calving paralysis is fecal/maternal mismatch.

Another significant factor in calving paralysis is the time a calf is lodged in the birth canal. This is like sitting with your legs crossed for too long—supersized.

Next is a controlled breeding season leading to a controlled calving season. It's a fundamental management tool, and so much builds on this. Human nature and our time have proven that producers can and will observe cattle more closely over the 45- to 90-day calving season rather than all year long. Cows, especially heifers, should be observed, in my opinion, at least twice a day and be in a location where they can easily be moved in a timely manner to a working facility if there are calving issues.

Q My neighbor says that bulls can breed cows for several weeks after castration. I find that hard to believe. Is that possible?

A DR. McMILLAN: In theory, it could happen. Semen can live in the upper reproductive tract for several weeks after castration. I have never seen it happen, but I guess it's possible. So, if you band or castrate bull calves that are close to or are sexually mature, it would be best to keep them away from breeding age heifers and cows for three weeks.

If any readers have ever had this happen, please let us know. ///

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CATTLE LINK

Story and Photos By **Becky Mills**

Buy or DIY?

Replacement heifers come with complex considerations when deciding the best path to take.

Last year, Terry Kirkland ended up with what could only be described as a gift. A doctor friend was getting out of the cattle business and specifically wanted Kirkland to have his replacement heifers. Kirkland quoted him a price under market value, but the 23 top-quality yearlings ended up in his pasture.

Even with that stroke of luck, ask the Batesville, South Carolina, cattleman whether he'd rather buy or grow his own heifers, and he doesn't hesitate.

"The main reason I want to raise my own is I can control their size and the genetics better that way. I run about 1,300-pound to 1,400-pound cows, and I don't like them any bigger."

He continues, "I make sure I have a good low-birthweight bull to put with them, so I know I won't have calving problems. When you buy heifers, a fella can say it was a low-birthweight bull, but you aren't sure sometimes. I know I'm able to tell more about the temperament, too, when I raise them myself. That's important for me when I have to tag the calves in the pasture. I don't need one that's gonna be running over me." The 71-year-old cattleman adds, "That's even with vaccinating and deworming them; you can't have crazy stuff when you get older.

"They are used to your environment," he continues. "I live in the sand land, and we have mostly bermudagrass and bahiagrass, and that's what they have to learn to live on. If you raise them on that, you can tell if they're gonna make it or not."

Terry Kirkland

RAISED HEIFERS MINIMIZE EXPECTED PROBLEMS

Kirkland also says he can keep negative surprises to a minimum. "I'm not cutting buying replacement heifers, but you don't know about foot problems until they get about 3 years old." Since he has raised their dams and granddams, he's already culled problems out of his 120-cow Angus-based herd.

"I just like to watch the heifers grow into good mama cows," Kirkland explains.

In Branchport, New York, John Kriese has similar thoughts about his Red Angus, Angus and Hereford cattle. "We've been doing it for 50 years, so I've tried to keep all the gremlins out of the closet. I guess I could buy heifers. But, my question is, what did their grandmother do and their great-grandmothers, and what's going on in that pedigree versus my own?"

There is also the cost factor. Kirkland says that at this past February's Saluda County Cattlemen's Association heifer sale, both bred and open heifers averaged about $3,300. "I know I can raise them way cheaper than that," he adds.

LOOK AT ALL OPTIONS

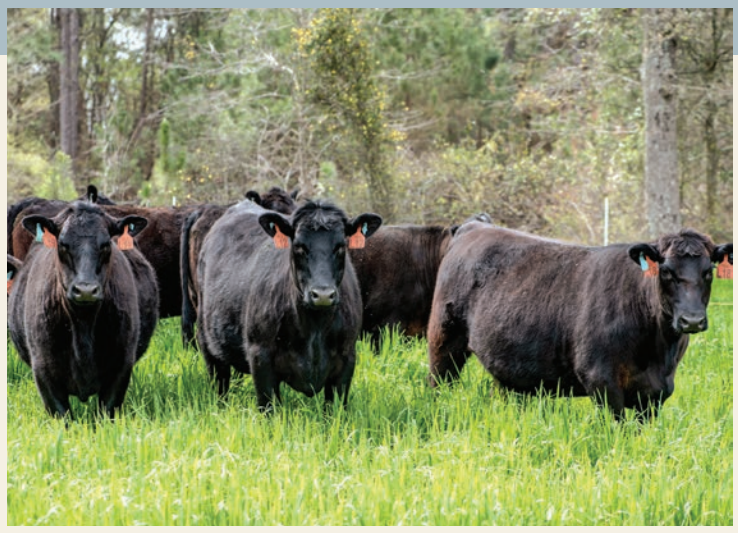
Curt Lacy, head of the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center, needs to boost cow numbers at the station and is mulling over the buy versus raise-your-own decision. He agrees with Kirkland's and Kriese's reasoning. However, his background as an ag economist surfaces when he starts putting numbers on a spreadsheet. First, there is the cost of the potential replacement herself, or in economist-speak, opportunity cost. In late spring, actual auction numbers for 5-weight heifers were between $2.75 and $3 per pound.

Then there are the development costs. "What's it going to take to get her from weaning to the time we're ready to breed her?" he asks. "There is pasture, hay, supplemental feed, minerals, weaning vaccinations, anything that's going to be a part of that growing program." Lacy says it all counts, even minor costs such as ear tags. Then, there are interest costs, whether you borrow the money to develop her or not. Just to get her to breeding age and weight, he comes up with an average of $750.

The bull, or bulls, add a tidy little sum, especially if you only have a small number of heifers. By the time she's bred, Lacy comes up with a cost of $3,000 to $3,500 up to $4,000, and that's taking out the income from culling the open heifers.


Curt Lacy

It isn't all about the numbers, though. Lisa Kriese-Anderson, retired Auburn University animal scientist, as well as John Kriese's sister, says, "For the commercial guys who are interested in genetics and are going to take the time to buy good bulls and keep records, I suggest they keep their own. But, if that's not their thing, they just need to buy them."



Kirkland, the South Carolina producer, adds, "Unless you have the extra pasture for them and the right setup, it is better to buy them. You can't put them with your mama cows and expect them to grow."

Lacy says, "There's really no right or wrong answer. The right answer is the one that works best for you." ➤

John Kriese

The Best of Both Worlds

John Kriese is passionate about raising quality heifers. However, the cattleman has a list of challenges that go along with developing replacements. “I am not a farmer; we do not grow our own feed. I don’t have the land, the machinery or the interest, so I buy most of it.”

Recently, he started getting a tube of corn silage custom-harvested. However, his supplemental forage and feed usually consist of round bales of hay (purchased and homegrown) as well as purchased protein pellets and corn.

The perfect compromise, at least for Kriese, is to send his heifers out to be developed. For the last eight years, his Angus heifers have gone to Pennsylvania State University’s heifer development program. The rest of the time, they stay at the farm of his business partner, 80-year-old veterinarian Timothy J. Dennis. Sending them off to be developed and bred means one less group of cattle he has to feed and manage.

The Red Angus heifers go to Jason TenEyck, who also develops heifers for other members of the New York Red Angus Association. Kriese’s weaned heifers go to the Waterloo, New York, facility around Nov. 1 when they weigh 550 to 600 pounds. He brings them home the end of April weighing 900 to 950 pounds. Currently, Kriese breeds them himself when he gets them home.

“I think Jason can develop those heifers cheaper than we can,” for $2.90 per head per day, he says. “He has beautiful facilities, they are superclean, and he has really high-quality forages.” If Kriese developed them himself, he estimates he would invest around $1,000 per head.

While many of the university-sponsored heifer development programs collect data on the heifers, including reproductive tract and disposition scores, the New York consignors stick with the basics, weighing the heifers every 28 days. The producers also go in together and have an ultrasound technician do carcass measurements. Kriese says this would be cost prohibitive for smaller producers to have the technician come to their individual operations.

Even better, farming his heifers out for development means he’s been able to expand his cow herd to take advantage of the record-breaking cattle prices.

Kriese adds, “It also allows you the opportunity to reflect on your breeding program.

“Your heifers are in a pen with heifers from other breeders. How are they doing? How do they look? It gets us through mud season,” he adds. ///

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Replacement Beef Heifer Development, Brandi Karisch, Mississippi State University **extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/replacement-beef-heifer-development**
- UF Replacement Heifer Cost Estimation Tool, Hannah Baker, UF-IFAS **rcrec-ona.ifas.ufl.edu**
- Raising Versus Buying Heifers for Beef Cow Replacement **www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/livestock/html/b1-73.html**

By **Jennifer Carrico**, @JennCattleGal

From Beef to Skin Care

KATIE BIGGINS

Katie Biggins started using beef tallow to make skin-care products in early 2024 and was selling her product by October of that same year.

South Dakota ranchers expand their retail meat business to include products from their herd's beef tallow.

A passion for the beef industry and health care led Katie Biggins to add a new enterprise using a beef byproduct—tallow—to her family's already-growing ranch-to-retail beef business.

As a nurse, Biggins searches for healthy products for her family that are clean (made with all-natural ingredients) and truly work, especially when it comes to skin care. "I had heard a lot on social media about beef tallow and its benefits, so I decided it was time to really do some research," she says. "I realized I had beef tallow in my freezer, so trying it out would be fairly easy."

She started experimenting in the summer of 2024, transforming her Gregory, South Dakota ranch kitchen into a lab where she measured, rendered, mixed and blended until she found the right formula. "Beef tallow may be a trend used by many today, but it's actually something our ancestors used for centuries before us for its healing properties," Biggins explains.

"It's a biocompatible superfood for your skin. It contains restorative fatty acids and nutrients nearly identical to our skin's natural lipid barrier," she continues.

The key benefits of tallow are improved skin cell health, restoration of moisture, soothing of inflammation, protection against premature aging, strengthening of the skin barrier and easy absorption.

Initially, Biggins gave away the skin-care products to family and friends. Their praises and encouragement convinced her to sell the products starting in October 2024 under the brand Biggins Cattle Co. Tallow.

QUALITY COUNTS

The now called Biggins & Co. Tallow is made from suet, which is the highest quality fat from a beef carcass. It's rendered in small batches over three days for purity and stability. Rendering starts with multiple wet renders to remove any impurities. After the initial wet rendering and straining, the next phase involves dry rendering. This process requires strict temperature control of around 130°F to evaporate any remaining moisture to ensure a shelf-stable and smooth-textured product, while preserving the tallow's nutrients and vitamins. The tallow is odorless—yet nutrient dense—and whipped to a soft, spreadable texture. It's also free of fillers, preservatives or synthetic fragrances.

The products are made of tallow and jojoba oil, which helps with hydration into the skin. Jojoba oil comes ➤

Gracie Biggins fills jars with beef tallow product as her mom Katie watches. The Biggins & Co. Tallow skincare is sent all across the country.

JENNIFER CARRICO

JENNIFER CARRICO

All members of the Biggins family help on their South Dakota cattle ranch. Pictured left to right are Gracie, David, Katie and Jessy, with Brooks in front.

from the jojoba nut and has been used for centuries by Native Americans for its nourishing properties. The oil is a staple in the cosmetic industry for its nutritional and beauty benefits. Biggins says it's not oily but is like the natural sebum that skin produces, making the tallow ideal for all skin types. Jojoba oil also helps brighten, tighten and smooth skin, which Biggins says can help balance your complexion.

Essential oils are purchased from an U.S. company that sources it from around the world. Those used in the scented products are sustainable, nontoxic, cruelty-free and vegan-produced for high quality. The vanilla is from grade A Madagascar vanilla beans with powerful antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. Other ingredients used include frankincense, manuka, blue tansy and tea tree oil. "I want everything to be high quality, tested and natural," she explains.

FAMILY LEGACY

Katie and her husband, Jessy, bought their current cattle herd in 2010 from her dad, but it was started by previous generations of the family. The couple's children—David, 16; Gracie, 14; and Brooks, 6—are the fifth generation to carry on the ranching legacy. The family works together to care for the cattle. Gracie can also be found in the kitchen helping with tallow production.

Biggins says when she and Jessy decided to select cattle from their herd to feed and sell for the retail beef business, they wanted the very best they could raise. "We started looking more closely at genetics and making sure we are raising high-quality Angus beef for our beef business," she explains. "The quality extends into the tallow, as well."

Their beef business continues to grow. They handpick which animals are fed out and have a few cows calving in the fall to help provide product year-round. These same animals are the source for the tallow products. Their cattle are pasture-raised, grass- and grain-finished, hormone-free Angus cattle that are USDA inspected.

The Biggins' retail beef business started with inquiries from the hundreds of hunters who travel to their ranch each fall for pheasant hunting. They asked about buying whole, halves or quarters of beef after seeing the cattle on the ranch. Eventually, these hunters became their first customers, and the rising demand for their beef led to the retail beef business.

To learn more about retail, Biggins did a mentorship with a ranch-to-retail business in California to learn the logistics of e-commerce, social media strategy and shipping. The couple also received a USDA Value-Added Producer Grant to help with business growth.

For now, a freezer trailer is used to store meat for retail sales. Beef is shipped once per month, but tallow products are shipped soon after orders are received. The Bigginses hope to build a shop soon to house the growing beef and tallow business. "[I want] one that will include a commercial kitchen for rendering and whipping the tallow in a temperature-controlled space," she says with a laugh, since she's been using the family's kitchen. It will also include walk-in freezers for ease of storing the beef inventory. Biggins would also eventually like to be able to have seasonal customer events and on-site shopping.

"Our mission is to have intentional growth. We want to continue to provide an expanding line of products on the beef and tallow side, but not lose sight of the importance of raising high-quality beef with proper stewardship," she says. ///

Biggins & Co. Tallow

Here are products available for the face, hands and skin, as well as lip balm. Prices range from $5 to $44.

- Whipped Tallow Facial Cream: Neroli, Tansy, Radiance
- Clarify No. 5: Formulated for acne-prone skin
- Smoke: Earthy & maculine for hands that work hard
- Whipped Tallow Balm: Infused Vanilla Bean, Santal
- Bare Tallow Cream: Unscented
- Tallow Lip Balm & ChapStick

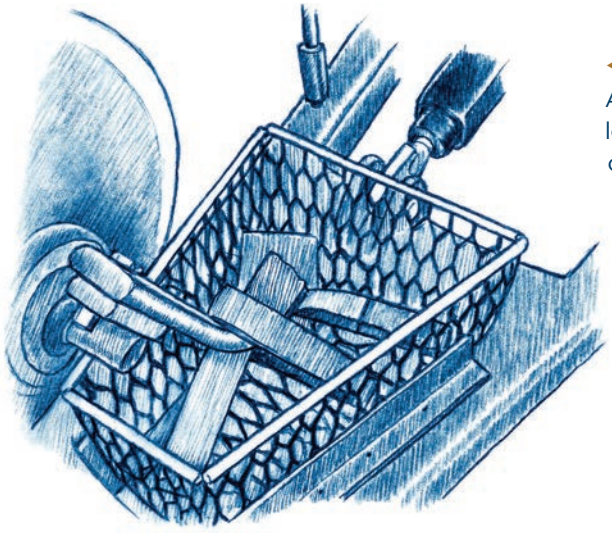
For More Information:
bigginscattleco.com

JENNIFER CARRICO

By **Dan Miller**, Illustrations By **Ray E. Watkins Jr.**

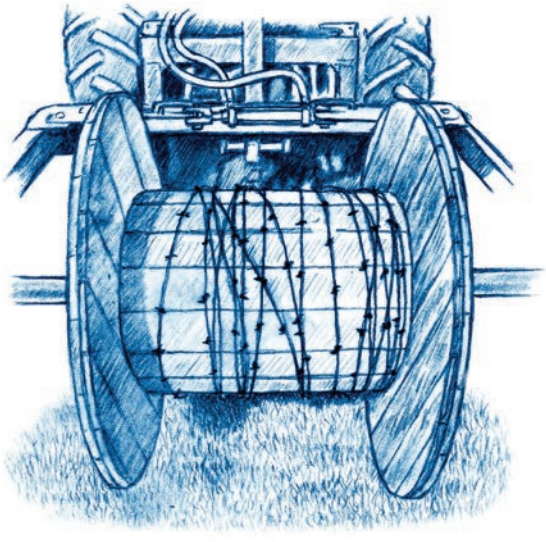
Handy Devices

Easy-to-build ideas make your work easier.



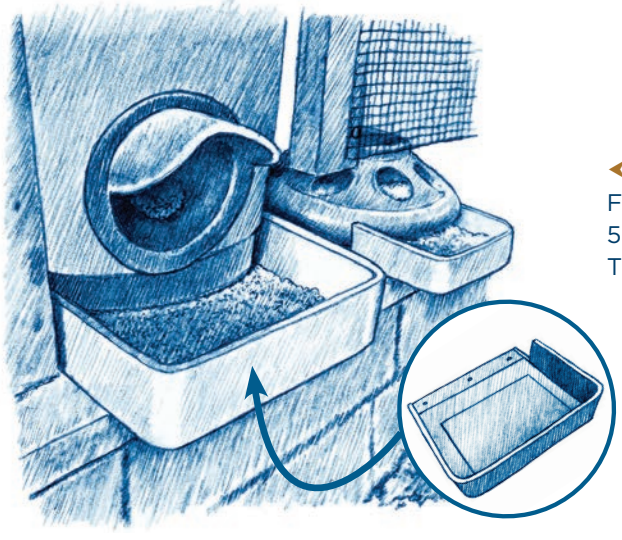
DEBRIS CATCHER

Alex Waldner, Mitchell, South Dakota, was looking for a better way to keep the inside of his cab more organized. He was always stepping around chains and disc parts. So, he created a storage bin. He made the metal box with scrap pieces and welded lengths of angle iron to the sides of the box to hold it in place. The box works well, giving Waldner ample room for chains, parts, tools and the rocks he collects in the field.



ROLLED UP

Wayne Brown, Wesson, Mississippi, built an easy way to take up old fencing. He used a hay unroller and a discarded wire spool. Brown ran a pipe through the spool out to the arms that would otherwise hold a bale for unrolling. He attached wire to the spool and began moving forward. Brown found the spool could roll up about 1,000 feet of wire. The wire can be discarded with the spool or unrolled again for a new fencing project.



3D-PRINTED TRAYS

For years, Bruce Simons, Webb, Iowa, used 5-gallon buckets to feed and water his chickens. The system worked, but it was messy, with water and feed spilling everywhere. Simons designed a tray that can be slipped directly beneath the feed and water dispensers to catch the excess. He produced it on his 3D printer. Now, there is no wasted feed, and the water is contained—a great, high-tech addition to the henhouse.

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@dtn.com****. Sorry, but we cannot acknowledge submissions or return photographs, drawings or documentation.*

Story and Photos By **Des Keller**

Prawns On The Prairie

Nebraska farmer turns to raising shrimp to diversify the family's cattle and crops operation.

When someone in Nebraska shows you his or her latest livestock venture, you wouldn't anticipate they'd dip a net into a water tank and pull out twitching, nearly-ready-for-market shrimp.

That's exactly what Grant Jones does in a converted machine shed on his family farm, near Haigler, in the far southwest corner of the state. In fact, there are thousands of shrimp growing in one of eight 3,750-gallon tanks in the building, each containing shrimp at various stages of growth.

A retrofitted machine shed used to raise shrimp relies on radiant heat from water in the tanks to warm the building.

Every month, Jones receives a new shipment of 10,000 tiny postlarvae (PL) shrimp from hatcheries in Florida or Texas. Each PL is about the size of an eyelash, and all 10,000 of the Pacific white shrimp he grows are initially placed in one tank.

"I'll split them up and divide them into separate tanks as they grow," Jones explains. Over about four months—dining on a diet of fish meal and soy meal—the shrimp that survive will be ready for sale.

The 36- x 72-foot building with 14-foot sidewalls is kept at 75 to 80°F by the radiant heat from the water in the tanks. Jones uses a 199,000-Btu water heater and applied spray foam to insulate the building. Spending extra on insulation keeps his heating bill to less than $200 per month.

So far, income from the shrimp is negligible to the farm's overall revenue. "I'd like to expand, but I'm still working on consistency of product and replicating the process," he says.

SMALL-SCALE CHALLENGES

Jones' interest in crustaceans was piqued by an article he read fresh out of college about Midwestern farmers growing shrimp in former hog barns. Jones, 33, grew shrimp consistently from 2020 through 2023, taking a "season" off in early 2024.

Why did he decide on shrimp? "I hate chickens," he says. "I couldn't see myself raising chickens. I wanted to diversify and bring something of my own to our operation. My parents and grandparents have always encouraged me."

Jones has no illusions as to the endgame for growing shrimp on a small scale in rural Middle America.

"Nearly everything I raise is going to someone local," he says. "I've built some regular customers, and I've always got a list of others who are interested if I produce some extra. Those customers have been built by word of mouth and social media like Facebook."

Selling locally, either at an independent retail outlet, restaurant or at the farm itself, is just about the only way to survive raising shrimp, or any aquaculture, on a small scale, according to experts at Purdue University.

"Grocery stores are all about price, volume and consistency," says Kwamena Quagrainie, an aquaculture economics/marketing specialist at the university. "Margins are very small, and outlets can get shrimp cheaper from distributors," he adds.

"This type of shrimp operation is very niche," Quagrainie continues, and relies on local area customers willing to pay a higher price for a fresh, local product. "A farmer's breakeven is about $12 to $14 per pound."

Jones sells his shrimp for $20 per pound. He'd like to get costs down below $10 per pound. Farmed shrimp from countries such as Ecuador, India, Thailand and Vietnam, selling for $6.99 to $9.99 per pound—depending on size—dominate the retail market, Quagrainie explains.

Even if a small producer can sell shrimp above their break-even cost, that assumes there will be a supply to sell. In the PL stage, shrimp are quite delicate and sensitive, he continues. Mortality rates greater than 50% are not unusual, as Jones can attest. The shrimp, their water quality, temperature and feed ratios must be monitored daily.

CATTLE PRIORITIES

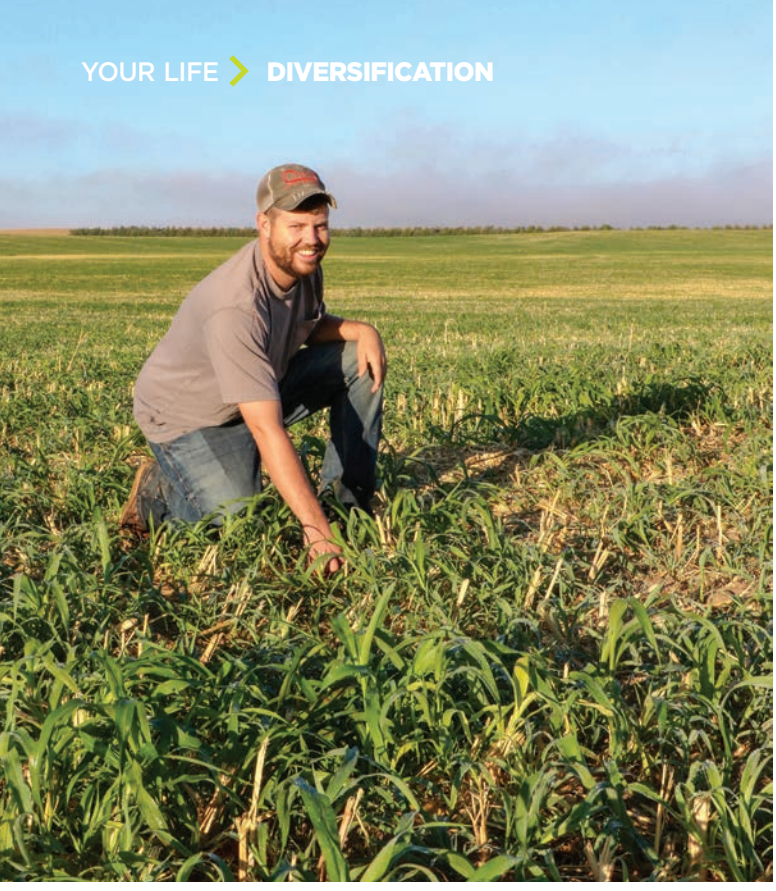
We did say the shrimp was a sideline. Along with three employees, his mother, Julie, and occasional help from his father, Shawn (Shawn Jones is a longtime employee of Helena Agri-Enterprises), the family grows 1,000 acres of irrigated corn, soybeans and hay. They also have 600 mostly Angus cow/calf pairs, along with 1,600 yearlings on 15,000 acres of pasture. Jones is the sixth generation of his family to work there.

"We're predominantly a cattle operation," he says. "We farm to feed the cattle."

In the herd, they focus on genetics—particularly the females—that allow animals to do well in some extreme weather conditions.

"We have somewhat desert-type climate, and we want cows that just go out and thrive," Jones explains. The region receives average annual rainfall of about 18 inches.

The family operation, Chundy Land and Cattle, conducts an annual bull sale in Ogallala that involves more than 100 animals, some Angus and others with SimAngus genetics (Simmental and Angus). They also ➤



Grant Jones uses a diverse mix of cover crops for cattle to graze and to help him qualify for carbon sequestration payments.

market 50 to 70 females as commercial heifers.

"A lot of time, the heifers go as one big group to somebody," Jones says. "We get a really good response to those animals. We see them adding weaning weight due to heterosis."

The family's 1,000 acres of cropland is 100% irrigated via wells in the Ogallala Aquifer. Allocations allow for Jones to receive 12½ inches of water per year for his mostly sandy soils or 62½ inches over five years.

They use a lot of cover crops, including rye, a sorghum-sudangrass mix they call "cane," millet, triticale and alfalfa. In early April, he was already grazing cattle in fields with newly green cover crops.

"What we've tried to do is move from having something growing four months of the year to eight months," he says.

The family doesn't bale hay on any of its pasture—only from a portion of the irrigated crop ground. In terms of cattle feed, they are self-sufficient.

"If anything, we might sell some excess alfalfa hay and, in return, buy silage as supplemental feed," Jones adds.

COVER CROPS AND CARBON

The move to increase the use and diversification of cover crops has led Jones to begin the process of qualifying for carbon sequestration payments. He's working with Agoro Carbon Alliance, part of Norwegian-based fertilizer company Yara International. As of the beginning of last year, Agoro officials said they had enrolled 2 million acres in the U.S. in their carbon sequestration program.

Jones plans to seed a new mix of multispecies cover crops.

"We've always kind of done cover crops," Jones says. "We did things like drilling rye because we also planned to graze it in the spring. This is the first year we'll do multispecies of cover crops."

The multiple species include winter peas, turnips and radishes, as well as rye. Last fall, he was getting ready to seed a new cover crop mix. The grass part of the mix is 42% cereal rye, 21% triticale, 15% winter barley and 7% annual rye. The mix also contains Austrian winter peas (a legume) and small amounts of radish, turnip and forage collards. He plans to interseed legumes into some pastures (using a drone) and apply nitrogen on others.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Despite his leadership involvement in the Nebraska Angus Association and Nebraska Farm Bureau, Jones suspects he's considered something of an outlier in the region.

Participants in carbon sequestration programs are almost nonexistent in the area, so as "I start to apply more stuff—some funky seeds—I think people are going to wonder, 'What is he doing?'"

"I've gotten over what everyone else thinks, I'm just doing me," he says. His father, Shawn, and grandfather, Stan, have become more open to Jones' ideas over time. The reception was good enough on the carbon sequestration program that they'll begin additional cover crops on up to 11,000 acres this year—both pastures and their cropland.

As for the other enterprise? "Around here, people already know about the shrimp," he explains. "Being in that building off and on all day means I've been that guy running around in shorts and Crocs, even in the middle of winter." ///

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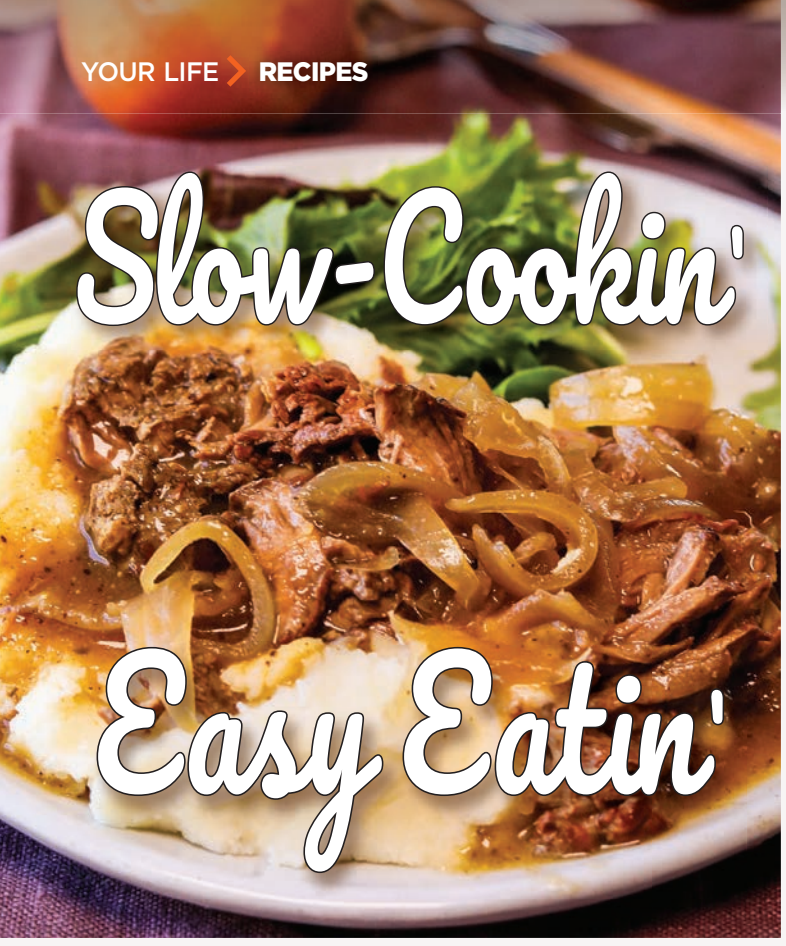


Slow-Cookin' Easy Eatin'

FRENCH ONION POT ROAST

Stay cozy through the holidays and beyond with this family-friendly meal.

TOTAL TIME: 20 MINUTES ACTIVE, 8–10 HOURS SLOW-COOKING
MAKES: 5–6 SERVINGS

1 tablespoon olive oil
2–3 pounds beef chuck roast
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
5 medium onions, thinly sliced
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce
1 (1- to 2-ounce) packet onion soup mix
3 cups beef stock
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons water

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Season both sides of the chuck roast with salt and pepper. Sear 4 to 5 minutes per side or until golden brown.
3. Transfer roast to the slow cooker. Add sliced onions, garlic, thyme, Worcestershire sauce, onion soup mix and beef stock.
4. Cover and cook on low 8 to 10 hours or until roast is fork-tender.
5. Remove roast from slow cooker, leaving onions and cooking liquid. Turn slow cooker to high (or transfer the liquid to a pot over medium heat). In a small bowl, combine cornstarch and water, stir, then add to cooking liquid. Stir until thickened (about 10 minutes).
6. Return roast to gravy, or serve with onions and sauce over mashed potatoes or cheesy grits.

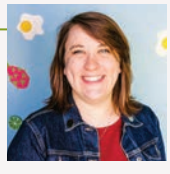
SLOW-COOKER LOADED BAKED POTATO SOUP

There's nothing like a hearty, potato- and cheese-filled soup to keep you warm on cold winter nights.

TOTAL TIME: 20 MINUTES ACTIVE TIME, 4–6 HOURS SLOW-COOKING
MAKES: 6 SERVINGS

6 strips bacon
4 cups potatoes (about 3 to 4 large russet potatoes), peeled and diced
1 small onion, chopped
2 teaspoons kosher salt
3 cups chicken broth
4 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups heavy cream
Salt and pepper, to taste
1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
Chopped green onions

1. Place 6 strips of bacon on a microwave-safe plate lined with paper towels. Microwave 3 to 4 minutes or until cooked through but not crispy. Let cool slightly, then chop into small pieces.
2. In a slow cooker, combine potatoes, onion, salt, chicken broth, butter and chopped bacon. Cook on low 4 to 6 hours or on high 3 to 4 hours or until potatoes are tender.
3. About 30 minutes before soup is done, whisk in the cornstarch and heavy cream. Continue to cook on low another 20 to 30 minutes to thicken.
4. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls; top with cheddar cheese and green onions before serving. ///



Recipes and Photos By
Rachel Johnson
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@racheltherecipe

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August

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August

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July

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July

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Peace

GETTY IMAGES

What's so funny 'bout peace, love, and understanding?
NICK LOWE

The life of inner peace, being harmonious and without stress, is the easiest type of existence.
NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

I have always believed that women are not victims; we are agents of change, we are drivers of progress, we are makers of peace—all we need is a fighting chance.
HILLARY CLINTON

Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without.
BUDDHA

Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures.
JOHN F. KENNEDY

Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace.
AMELIA EARHART

Not one of us can rest, be happy, be at home, be at peace with ourselves, until we end hatred and division.
JOHN LEWIS

Run to the rescue with love, and peace will follow.
RIVER PHOENIX

It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.
JIMI HENDRIX

Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means.
RONALD REAGAN

If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.
DESMOND TUTU

Do not let the behavior of others destroy your inner peace.
DALAI LAMA

Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.
ALBERT EINSTEIN

Peace is a journey of a thousand miles and it must be taken one step at a time.
LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.
JOHN 14:27 (KJV)

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