



..... **STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH**
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It is hard to believe that we are past two weeks into January already. As most people I have been a little slow with a lot of things, as we adopt to the New Year like writing 2016 instead of 2015 and trying to wrap our brains around how fast time really goes. Most people make resolutions like taking off those extra pounds, quitting smoking or chew, attend Church more regularly or perhaps cut back on soft drinks or coffee. I decided that perhaps we should look at some resolutions if we are involved in the agriculture industry. So if you are a farmer and wondering how you can make a few changes to your life over the upcoming year, here are some suggestions. So out with the old and in with the new as 2016 commences.

It is a time where we promise ourselves to give up an old habit or try something new, being something big or small. A New Year's Resolution is a tradition, but not always with farmers or ranchers. Here are some suggestions for farmers:

1.) Create and maintain friendships and associations: Try and meet new friends in agriculture, along with maintaining your previous friendships. Farming in rural Nebraska is an occupation that often comes with a lot of isolation. It is important that farmers meet with other friends by various means of communication. It doesn't necessarily mean meet every day but even a weekly meeting or an often phone conversation can help to maintain the friendship. You can communicate with other farmers by attending local livestock sale barns, auctions, producer groups, auctions, local coffee shops, farm organizations and breed associations. I of course suggest you consider your local extension office offerings. Attending events such as seminars, clinics, etc., as those educational events can result in the creation of friendships --let alone learning something. Now, like no time before, I feel it is important that farmers get out and about, socially interacting with others. Some options which is becoming increasingly popular is meeting new friends is through the use of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. There even seems to be a network of phones that ding in unison with the daily markets.

2.) Make a special effort to keep paperwork up to date. The word 'paperwork' is one that some farmers shiver at. The practice of better data recording on farms increases the overall performance. By keeping your paperwork in order it reduces stress on the farmer and ensures everything is maintained to the best standard. The farmer will not have any additional stress or pressure when it comes to the presentation of documents during on- farm inspections or for annual accounts keeping. You already know how important it is for tax, pesticide application, etc. But with all the regulations that have been levied towards agriculture and most likely more on the way. Even with the good news that the house voted down WOTUS.

I suggest that you devise a plan in order to deal with all paperwork both farming and household. Have a fixed place where all the paperwork is assembled and organized. Some farmers have a special office unit, where they keep their farm paperwork separate to everything else. Organize a day of the week, whereby you can sit down and keep the paperwork for that week up to day, in order to avoid a pile- up. Perhaps most important, have a simple filing system, where you place all bills together that need to be paid but in order of priority, the bills that needed to be paid first should be placed on top. There are a variety of online farm management software programs which makes it easier to create and maintain all farm records.

3.) Take on something new- If you have also wanted to complete a particular course either a college course or training course either in a college or online, then make 2016 the year you achieve this. Attend as many educational events as you can. Learn what is going on in the world. If you know of a farmer that has always wanted to incorporate technology in their life either for their own benefit or for the benefit of the farm, then encourage them to make this coming year, a time when they become a user of a laptop, smartphone or a tablet. The use of technology has made farming a lot easier and smarter.

4.) Buy a diary and a pen or use a tablet! A small sized note book (seed corn) is essential on every farm. Farmers can record all what has happened on the farm. The entries can be as simple as recording when you moved cattle into the stalks or pasture, spread fertilizer, a cow calved or came into estrus or received medicine such as an injection that has a specified withdrawal period. When it is down on a paper, a farmer knows exactly, avoiding any stress or confusion or problems down the road. In a diary, the deadlines for relevant programs can also be recorded. Make a special effort to keep to deadlines- Farming is a busy, time consuming occupation, a way of life that requires dedication, motivation, time and a love for what you are doing. With lack of time on a farm it can be difficult to remember everything especially when the unexpected eventualities occur. Deadlines for farm bill, bank notes or other commitments or even for the completion of on-farm maintenance, sending in an application or recording information on a database, all of which can be difficult to keep track of

5.) Stay safe and healthy. Make time to spend with family and friends. Insufficient time is a common problem for farmers, as they work round the clock caring for their animals, planting or harvesting. Making time for family, friends and significant other halves is very important and is a part of being and keeping safe. I suggest that you make a 'Family Day Out' something you will do in 2016, if you haven't already! Incorporate farm safety on your farm during 2016. Taking care of your health is very important and it is often something that is not considered by farmers, so much so that the health of their animals comes before their own health. Farmers pick up the phone and contact a vet for a sick animal much more often or easily than they will make an appointment when they are sick themselves! Happy New Year and Happy Farming!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer, which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or Nebraska Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, Nebraska Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email: dlienemann2@unl.edu or on the web at: <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster>