

VETERINARY CALL

by Bob Larson, Kansas State University

Lessons I've Learned

A lifetime of growth and gained knowledge.

A profitable, sustainable cattle ranch requires constant adjustments and improvement — which demands continuous learning. Fortunately, cattle producers and veterinarians can learn from experts, mentors, neighbors and of course, experience.

Very early on when I started preparing for a career working with cattle, I was fortunate to have excellent parents, teachers, FFA advisors, 4-H leaders and mentors who provided critical information, skills, and challenges.

As I pursued higher education, I learned essential aspects of cattle growth, health and reproduction from experts who had spent their lives discovering critical foundations of the cycle that converts sunlight to plants to cattle to a high-quality, delicious source of protein for people. I learned the theory and practice of providing optimum diets to cattle in various stages of production, utilizing advanced reproductive technologies, and preventing and treating common health problems. Also, very importantly, I was trained how to search for new information and how to assess its accuracy and application to specific ranching operations or individual cattle.

Learning to solve problems

Once I finished formal education, the speed of exposure to challenges to address and problems to solve

increased. I learned from my veterinary mentors and peers how to interact with cattle producers, when to question my initial answer, new ways to address problems, and how to enjoy veterinary medicine.

Our understanding of many aspects of cattle production and health has increased greatly during my career, and I continually learn from veterinarians, animal scientists and other experts who collectively have vast wisdom and experience.

Learning from cattlemen

I also learned essential knowledge from my clients who taught me the advantages and disadvantages of certain feedstuffs, how to handle cattle more efficiently, strategies to optimally manage forages, and a diverse and holistic view of cattle production. All of my interactions with cattle producers result in a two-way exchange of lessons learned that benefits both me and my clients.

As I moved into the role of a teacher and mentor, I found that younger cattle producers and veterinarians added even more to my knowledge. It has been interesting and rewarding to learn from the next generation, who have different skills and life experiences. Thus, I can grasp current challenges and opportunities that are not adequately mapped by my own experiences.

This phase of my journey of lifelong learning may be the most

“*Learning is hard work, but the beef industry is complex and constantly changing, so the knowledge of previous generations won't be sufficient for continual improvement.* — BOB LARSON

demanding — but potentially, highly gratifying. Although I admit past solutions are not likely to solve current and future problems, I find it challenging to deviate from the remedies proposed and tested by the teachers, mentors and peers who taught me. Although I feel discomfort at times, it is exciting to see the next generation of problem-solvers and their ideas for continued profitability and sustainability of cattle production.

As I look back at the lessons I have learned so far, I remember a multitude of people providing different perspectives, expertise, experience, and priorities who have trained me to this point in my career. Learning is hard work, but the beef industry is complex and constantly changing, so the knowledge of previous generations won't be sufficient for continual improvement.

Fortunately, raising cattle provides a “lifelong classroom” for anyone who wants to pursue greater wisdom and understanding. **AJ**

EDITOR'S NOTE: Robert L. Larson is a professor of production medicine and executive director of Veterinary Medicine Continuing Education at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan.

BUYER FRIENDLY.

SELLER EFFICIENT.



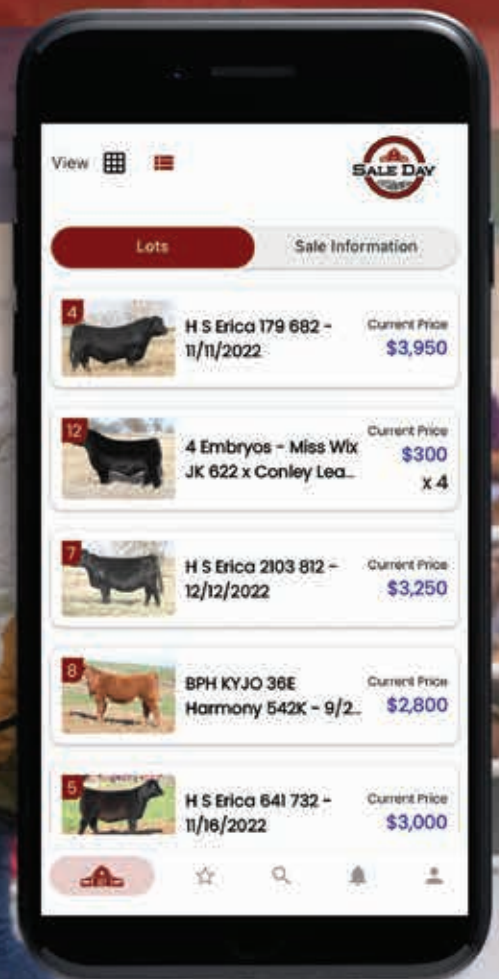
Easiest way to

BID, BUY & SELL

cattle online.



Download the app or visit
AGSALEDAY.COM



@AGSALEDAY

