

VETERINARY CALL

by Bob Larson, Kansas State University

Investing in the Future

The next generation of people and ideas is setting the industry up for success.

Wisely investing in the future essentially requires investing in people who have ideas that will succeed — whether those ideas are already proven or yet to be tried.

The current group of young cattle producers and veterinarians who are starting to provide important leadership for their herds,

their communities and the Angus breed will be increasingly making the decisions that determine the success of the beef industry. The beef industry benefits from generational transfer of knowledge, experience and expectations from older producers to younger producers, and also benefits from adoption of new technologies, methods and outcomes introduced by young visionaries.

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Relationship investing is very similar in that older, experienced producers and veterinarians have a pragmatic understanding of what has worked in the past, while we may have less clarity about what will work in the future.


Young industry participants are likely to have a better prediction, or at least a wider range of options for what may work in the future, but lack experiential lessons grounded in production and marketing realities of the past.

I think it is safe to assume the future will reveal continued changes in production efficiency, meat quality and consumer communication. Integrating previously successful production and marketing practices with new methods requires both experienced producers and innovators working together.

Young producers and veterinarians who capitalize on easily accessible and continually increasing computing capacity are already learning to harness information to improve decision-making. Using social media and other

communication tools allow young producers to bring their experience living both in a digital world of information bits and an analog world grounded in soil, grass and cattle directly to their clients and downstream consumers.

Experienced cattle producers and veterinarians have the option to invest time, attention and financial opportunities in early-career producers who have a different set of skills and experiences. The benefits for this type of investing can include immediate production and market advantages, as well as longer-term paybacks as the world increasingly becomes structured by the next generation of decision-makers.

Because the future is unknown and best practices to thrive in the forthcoming years are not clear, it seems to me that individual ranches and the beef industry as a whole are most likely to succeed when wisdom and experience earned from the past are invested in and combined with the people, innovation and effort of the future as the next generation adapts to the world they will lead. 

Editor's note: Robert L. Larson is a professor of production medicine and executive director of Veterinary Medicine Continuing Education at Kansas State University.