



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Collecting our thoughts

With almost any task, much of the time spent is in the planning stages — collecting our thoughts so when we put our shoulders to the task, we can do so with efficiency. As a child, it didn't take long to figure out that's what Dad's coffee breaks were all about. For me, it's "sleeping on it," then getting up in the wee hours to ruminate on a subject before the chaos of the day ensues.

A lot of new

These days, we are dealing with so much new in agriculture — new technology, new rules and regulations, new genetics, new ... Whether we're learning about a tax code, figuring out a new electronic scale (for the barn, not the bathroom) or understanding what that new genomic test does, it takes some study.

Shoot, when Todd's family got a new combine, he studied the manual through the winter so he would feel comfortable operating the thing with all its new precision-farming computer gadgets. It's not as simple as slopping the pigs and throwing out some scratch for the chickens.

The thing we don't have is new time. We might be able to turn on the lights on the tractor or in the barn, but the length of a day is finite. Our challenge is to make sure we continue to prioritize the time spent collecting our thoughts — planning, so we're not just reacting.

Teamwork

Of course, there are some thoughts that have to originate with you, but there are other times when it may be more efficient to pay someone to collect your thoughts for you.

For example, it might be more efficient — and more enjoyable — to call on a tax accountant to study up on just how a new tax code will affect you and suggest ways for your operation to benefit the most, or at least be harmed the least.

It might be more efficient to ask your veterinarian what health requirements there will be for delivering a bull three states away. If he or she doesn't know off the top of his/her head, he/she is likely to have the resources and know how to use them to find an answer much more quickly than you would.

The importance of building your team or network of advisors has been a common



theme at meetings and in conversations this past year. There's good reason.

Farmers and ranchers are typically a pretty independent lot and very private. It doesn't come natural to share the details of your operation with anyone. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that building those relationships is going to be paramount to your sustainability. I'll define that as your ability to continue to farm or ranch in a profitable enough and enjoyable enough manner to keep at it.

Most seedstock producers have the veterinary-client-patient relationship down well, though they might not use it to full advantage (I'll let you talk to your veterinarian for the answer to the obvious question that presents.). Yet how about a tax advisor? Do you consider your feed rep a salesman or a nutrition coordinator? Who do you have to seek advice about your pasture? Is your banker a necessary evil, or someone to help manage your

assess and provide advice on risk management?

Obviously, time at the coffee pot stopped the action to give Dad time to focus on planning out the next part of the day or thinking through a task. It also provided time for us all to be together in a room to consult with each other, and you know, that coffee pot's only a couple steps away from the phone, providing access to a whole network of assistance.

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