

## Why Do We Do It?

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Agriculture is a very unique business to be involved in, for many reasons. Many variables that are completely uncontrollable have an enormous impact on our productivity. The emotional considerations are real and meaningful, and often contrary to decisions based solely on economics. Environmental impacts are real and meaningful and they too are often contrary to decisions based solely on economics. Animal welfare considerations are real and meaningful and again, often contrary to decisions based solely on economics. Notice the pattern developing here? The production of inanimate widgets for profit considers very objective parameters to determine the direction of the business. Agriculture and more specifically animal agriculture must consider the cost of all decisions not only in dollars but in the prism of stewardship of God's creation both plant and animal. The responsibility is great, the volunteers are few, the economical reward is sporadic and risky, and the long term impact is extraordinary in scope.

"I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture, its breed of useful animals, and other branches of a husbandman's cares."

GEORGE WASHINGTON, letter, Jul. 20, 1794

There is no doubt a different standard for the agriculturalist as compared to most other professions in society. Balancing stewardship, profitability and the responsibility of feeding a nation (and world) is not for the faint hearted. Genetic advancements, mechanical improvements and technological growth continue to move our capability forward to achieve the ever increasing demands of food and fiber. The innovation and efficiency improvements that develop from the minds of men and women directly involved in the agricultural process everyday are vital to keep up with the requirements from the world that never stop increasing.

It is easier to be a good steward when prices are high and profits are healthy. Spending money to take good care of the animals under your care, making sure you are doing all that you need too environmentally to safeguard the earth from any harmful byproduct that results from your operation. When the markets go south is when the hard decisions begin. Finding the balance between "adequate" and "unacceptable" in animal comfort and environmental accommodations, while never losing sight of the actual monetary cost involved. Trying to make a living in animal agriculture sometimes just isn't fair! But it is what we signed up for when we got into this business to begin with - and most of us wouldn't trade it for anything. There are certainly challenges in most agricultural markets today. Opportunities abound to prioritize the most important aspects of the business while relegating the trivial to the end of the line.

Why do we do it? I will let you answer that question specifically for your operation – but I imagine I speak for the majority when I say we do it because we love it, because it is in our blood, because we feel a special responsibility to take care of our brothers and sisters in this world. Thank you for fighting the fight through good times and bad. Thank you for doing what you do, and thank you for

understanding and accepting the responsibility that doing the right thing trumps the urge to base every decision solely on its impact on the bottom line.