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How Emotions Affect Farm and Ranch Succession

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Cornhusker Economics

How Emotions Affect Farm and Ranch Succession

Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	1-11-20
Livestock and Products,			
Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	122.50	*	*
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb. . . .	176.27	163.62	173.98
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb. . . .	148.59	153.07	150.71
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	213.70	227.97	209.74
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.	51.97	*	*
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean.	69.11	80.60	72.30
Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn, 135-165 lb. National.	132.58	150.77	152.70
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB.	377.72	398.39	417.97
Crops,			
Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	4.49	3.69	4.43
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Columbus, bu.	3.49	3.53	3.77
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Columbus, bu.	7.93	8.22	8.70
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	5.69	5.73	6.07
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, Mn, bu.	3.35	3.14	3.47
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	*	*	*
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	105.00	107.50	107.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	87.50	95.00	95.00
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average.	151.00	156.00	158.50
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average.	53.00	51.00	50.00
* No Market			

Whenever a family has a discussion about agricultural estate planning, conversations can become emotionally charged. Stakes can be high and feelings can be hurt just by using the wrong words in a sentence. If things go south and parties are upset, they will likely withdraw from the dialogue or leave the gathering altogether.

When communications or negotiations break down, one way to help is to think about the five emotional *blocks* that need to be overcome if possible. They are: appreciation, affiliation, autonomy, status and role. Let's examine each to see how these blockages can interfere with a family moving forward.

- **Appreciation:** All people want to be appreciated. Always ask yourself, "are you really listening?" Seek first to understand, before you can be understood. That is easy to say, but harder to live. If participants are not being listened to, they feel undervalued and left out of the conversation. Be sure to listen to understand. Do not listen just to criticize what the other party is saying. And do not listen while thinking about what you are going to say next. Find merit with the other party's position, and prove you are listening and understanding what they are trying to say. Ask clarifying questions to improve your understanding of the information that you are receiving. Prove to the other party that you are listening and appreciate their points of view.

- **Affiliation:** When there is a conversation, are all parties in the conversation being treated as colleagues or as family? Or are we treating them like adversaries? Many of us learned how to negotiate from our parents, believing we have to *win* while the other party *loses*. These learned techniques came from buying machinery, purchasing livestock and other inputs for the operation. There are several examples of farmers who keep negotiating on a piece of machinery, working over the salesperson until they *win*. These learned techniques are probably not the best strategies for dealing with family. They are also not the best techniques when working on the family's farm or ranch succession plan. Do you need to win? That means someone else may feel that they lost. When dealing with family, please do not treat them as adversaries. Treat them as you'd want to be treated: like family. That approach will likely require a different mindset.

- **Autonomy:** Are you free to make decisions or are you being blocked? Be careful not to say that someone is in charge, only to criticize or undermine the decisions they have made. Sometimes autonomy is blocked by accident. This failure usually goes back to poor or failed communications. Autonomy is a two-way street, lined with respect and good communication. If someone has a role, they need to be allowed to carry out that responsibility. -

Status: Are all participants being treated as equals? If there are participants, or family members, feeling like they do not have equal status, then their attitude and participation might be affected. It makes some feel inferior and can affect self-esteem. Treat everyone with respect. Be courteous to all participants. Don't get caught up with the social status of the participants. When conversing about issues, be sure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and that they are treated as equal.

- **Role:** All participants should be satisfied with the role that they have within the business (farm/ranch). A fulfilling role has three qualities: it has a clear purpose, it is personally meaningful and it is not a pretense. If there are participants who do not have a fulfilling role, they will not feel like they can make an effective contribution. Every

one wants to feel like they have made a meaningful impact on the task at hand.

In addition to those five 'emotional blocks', be sure to **consider the value of women and young people**. For the emotions of autonomy, status and role, women and the younger generation may feel like they have been disenfranchised from the process because they are not being treated fairly or equitably for these three emotions. When families meet, the younger generations and the women need to be fairly included in the conversation and negotiation. Their voice needs to be heard, appreciated, and valued.

It is hard in some cases to have families positively work on farm and ranch succession plans. When there is trouble, review the five potential blockages which, if not considered properly, can be the reason that emotions derail progress for the family to succeed in their operation.

The article is adapted from the book "Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate," by Roger Fisher and Daniel Shapiro, published by Penguin Books in 2006.

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