

# TRAILHEAD

"BRINGING INNOVATION AND SUCCESS TO THE SANDHILLS"

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- Toll-Free .....800-233-6627
- Fertilizer Plant .....402-387-2323
- Feed Mill .....402-387-2810
- Mr. Tire – Mullen .....308-546-2281
- Mr. Tire – Valentine .....402-376-2060
- Farm Supply – Valentine ..402-376-3045
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- Keya Paha Division .....402-497-2020
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## SURVEY RESULTS ENLIGHTEN

Leave it to our patrons to provide a great response to the survey we sent out in late 2006.

### At Farmers Ranchers

we have patrons who care about their cooperative. That fact was borne out when 33% of you who were sent a survey filled it out and sent it back in. That's an excellent response, and the resulting information will help lead your cooperative into the future.

It's been six years since we last asked you important questions about your needs as farmers and ranchers and how you view the cooperative's products and services. We knew it was time to gather that information again. We sent surveys out to the 1,000 customers who make up 92% of our sales volume. Of that, 330 took the time to respond.

### What did we discover?

CHS and Land O'Lakes Member Services have compiled the results, and we're excited about what we've learned. Here are a few highlights:

- When asked, "What do you believe are the advantages of doing business with a cooperative?" the number one answer was competitive prices, followed closely by local control and profit sharing (see the

### MANAGER'S MOMENT

by Keith Erickson  
President & CEO

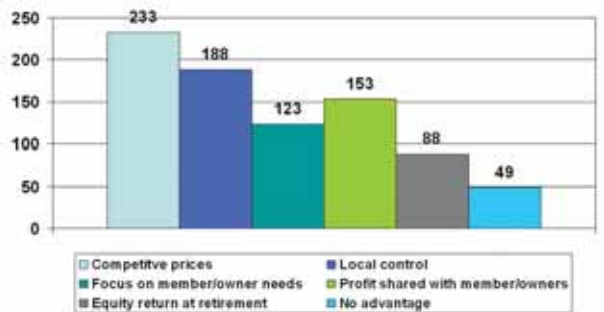


accompanying chart).

- We were pleased to find out that you appreciate our newsletter. Patrons ranked it as the preferred method to gather information about your cooperative.
- In terms of our agronomy division, we learned that our rancher customers, especially, depend on our application equipment and services.
- Feed is already a vital component of our cooperative, but we discovered there is room for growth in our trade area.
- Farmers and ranchers continue to depend heavily on our tire service.

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Competitive prices followed closely by local control and profit sharing were ranked the best advantages of doing business with a cooperative.



Q: What do you believe are advantages of doing business with a cooperative?

# BOARD REVIEWS SURVEY

Farmers Ranchers board chairman **Ron Heerten** is very pleased with the tremendous response from patrons to the survey the cooperative sent out late last year. “Getting a 33% response makes the data that much more valuable,” says this Springview producer. “It says a lot about the relationship



Board members and staff discuss results of the Farmers Ranchers survey during a special planning session in February.

between the patrons and their cooperative.”

Ron, along with other board members and management, reviewed the survey results during a planning session in February. “As a board we need to stay in tune with our members/customers,” says this cattleman and crop farmer.

“The survey is a very important tool to help us do that.”

Ron says he especially appreciated the many handwritten comments that patrons took time to include. “Those specific comments are very helpful,” he says. Some comments complimented particular employees or mentioned the need for more services in some areas, or gave a thank-you for some current service that is provided.

“We want our customers/owners to know that their input and comments to management or board members are always welcome and appreciated—and not just in a survey,” insists Ron. “We encourage members to always feel free to share their ideas, concerns, or appreciation. It’s important to keep the communication open.” ■

## SURVEY RESULTS ENLIGHTEN

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### What next?

Your board of directors and management is already putting the information we’ve gathered to work. With survey results in hand, the board gathered for a planning session in February. We met in Lincoln for the Nebraska Cooperative Council’s “Cooperatives for Tomorrow” session, adding a day to review the survey and plot trends in our industry and trade area that will impact your cooperative in the next few years.

This information reinforced some of what we’re already doing. It will also help us focus our efforts more effectively in order to make a positive difference to the success of your cooperative.

### What difference will it make?

As a cooperative, Farmers Ranchers isn’t strictly a business worried about its bottom line. That sets us apart from many businesses today. True, we strive to be profitable so that we can build equity to ensure we’re here in the future. But our mission is much broader.

We’re committed to providing quality products and services at competitive prices. We want to offer you a choice

in the marketplace. We’re also committed to helping sustain the communities we serve—providing jobs and resources. We’re hometown people who care about what happens to our communities. We’re also owned by you and determined to stay financially strong, paying back dividends and weathering the many challenges that lie ahead.

It’s a mighty task, but one we’re anxious to continue. We appreciate your ongoing support and willingness to participate in the survey that will help us chart our future course. Be sure to check out our Web site at [www.farmersrancherscoop.com](http://www.farmersrancherscoop.com) to read more of the survey results. ■

## WINNING PATRONS

Thank you to all patrons who participated in the **Farmers Ranchers** survey mailed out in November. We randomly drew the names of four respondents to win \$50 Cabela’s® gift certificates. Congratulations to:

**Carlyle Cook**, Springview

**Dave French**, Mullen

**Duane Hall**, Brewster

**Dave Rodgers**, Valentine

# NEW FINANCING OPTIONS

Farmers Ranchers is excited to offer a new financing option with our livestock producers in mind. Our new partner in the program is **Cofina Financial**, a company with a long history and commitment to agricultural lending. Financing with someone who understands your business can make all the difference.

## Benefits of doing business with Cofina Financial:

- Competitive loan rates; quick response on initial application
- Easy access to our funds; local service linked to national expertise
- A team that understands your business and wants you to succeed

You'll find complete financing packages for all of your production agronomy and livestock operation needs.

## Livestock production costs:

- Backgrounding feeder cattle; breeder livestock; feeder cows
- Refinancing for retained ownership of home-raised calves
- Labor expenses; feed and supplements; veterinary supplies

## Crop production costs:

- Crop protection chemicals; crop nutrients; crop insurance
- Seed
- Irrigation
- Repairs

## FINANCIAL FACTS

by Bob Mulligan  
Office Manager

## Other expenses:

- Rent and family living
- Hedging
- Transportation

Headquartered in Minnesota, Cofina Financial has over \$500 million in assets and offers financing for commercial customers as well as producers from Wisconsin to the Pacific Northwest and as far south as Kansas. If you'd like more information, contact me at our main office in Ainsworth. ■



## It's On the Web!

Want to see more results of our patron survey? Go to our Web site at [www.farmersrancherscoop.com](http://www.farmersrancherscoop.com)



*Check it out today!*

## MORE THAN JUST FEED

If you're in the livestock business and you haven't stopped in at the Feed Mill in

Ainsworth lately, it's time you do. We've been making some changes that make us a one-stop shop for all your livestock needs—from feed to electrolytes, vaccines to milk replacers, boluses to tags, fencing equipment to gloves, tanks to feeders. We're also carrying a line of horse tack manufactured right in our area by a local producer.

In other words, you name it, we've got it. And if we don't, we'll get it. That's the motto of **Shelli Irwin**, our storefront manager. Shelli's been busy building up the inventory at the Ainsworth location. In fact, Ainsworth now complements our Springview and Valentine livestock supply locations. Our goal is to provide you with the products and services in a convenient location. ■

### FEED FOCUS

by Rocky Sheehan  
Feed Marketing Director



## MEET SHELLI

**Shelli Irwin** knows livestock. Growing up on a farm near Fremont, Neb., Shelli got a degree in animal science and nutrition from the University of Nebraska before working as a chemist for a liquid cattle feed manufacturer. She then worked for an area cattle feeder before joining **Farmers Ranchers** last April.

Shelli is what you'd call a 'multi-tasker' in the front office and retail area of the Ainsworth Feed Mill. Call the Feed Mill, and you'll probably hear her voice on the other end of the line. Stop in for supplies, and she'll help you find what you need.

At home, Shelli and husband Rick, who works for the Nebraska Department of Roads, are multi-tasking, as well. They've got three children: sons Karsyn, 8, and Caeleb, 7, and daughter Rhion, 6.

The family raises some cattle, a couple of horses, and guineas.

We're glad to have Shelli as part of the Farmers Ranchers team. ■



# DIVISION PROFILE: PROPANE/APPLIANCE

## SERVICE WITH A SMILE

It's not every business that can boast about a crew who offers everything from safe and efficient delivery of propane to selling and servicing a home washer and dryer. Fortunately, your **Farmers Ranchers Cooperative** can make that claim—and more.

In fact, the name of our Propane and Appliance Division is a bit deceiving. Not only do we provide propane for home heating, or the latest in home appliances, but we also sell and service Dish Network satellite and Alltel® Wireless cell phone service and cell phones. "We are truly a full-service cooperative," says **Wes Luther**, division manager. "We provide products and services that our communities otherwise may not have."

### Propane

With propane storage in Ainsworth, Valentine, and Mullen, the co-op's six delivery trucks and drivers are on the road to more than 1,000 customers throughout our trade area. One goal is timely delivery. Even more important is safety. Everyone in the division is CETP-trained (Certified Employee Training Program). Not only do we deliver propane, but we can install and maintain your propane systems or appliances.

### Appliances

Customers continue to return to our Appliance Center in Ainsworth for a wide range of home appliances—everything from refrigerators to dishwashers. We sell, deliver, and service Maytag®, as well as Amana®, Crosley®, and Jenn-Aire® brands. Why so many repeat customers? "We've got competitive prices, quality products, and hometown service," says Wes. "We take care of our local customers, because we want them to come back."

### Satellite dish and cell phones

Farmers Ranchers has been selling Dish Network satellite

systems for three years now. Service technician **Danny Bennett** can install and maintain systems—or move a system for existing customers. In fact, he's installed more than 180 systems to date.

We also sell Alltel Wireless cell phone service and a complete line of cell phones and accessories. Alltel, the largest network in the U.S., is installing a new tower in Ainsworth, which should improve service in our area.

As secretary of the Propane/Appliance Division, **Connie Bennett** can give customers the ins and outs of cell phones, as well as answer questions about appliances, propane, or satellite dishes. She's an example of staff willing and able to take care of our customers. "I work with a great bunch of people who are very conscientious about the products they sell and the work they do. They really want to take care of the people in the communities we serve." ■



The Propane/Appliance staff is ready to serve you with a variety of products and services. From left to right: Connie Bennett, Danny Bennett, Ainsworth propane delivery driver Jeff Frederickson, and Wes Luther. Not pictured are delivery drivers Glenn Garner, Mullen; and Jon Bice and Gary Gallino, Valentine.

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