

# TRAILHEAD

"BRINGING INNOVATION AND SUCCESS TO THE SANDHILLS"

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## INVESTMENTS THAT WORK

In the issue of *Trailhead* one year ago, I announced that Farmers Ranchers was moving forward with two major projects impacting two divisions of your cooperative: the addition of three liquid fertilizer storage tanks at the Ainsworth fertilizer plant and a major upgrade to our feed mill with the addition of a pelleter.

It's great to report that both of these upgrades are panning out to be good investments. With the changing agronomy environment, it's imperative that we be able to lock in fertilizer purchases earlier than ever before. And, that means we must have storage space to accommodate those purchases. With our new 3,300-ton liquid fertilizer tank and two other smaller nutrient tanks, we were able to purchase a good deal of our fertilizer needs in mid-May for the 2009 growing season.

The extra storage has been valuable. It allows us to bring product in, and be prepared and positioned for the next season. Our goal is to have the fertilizer on-hand to meet your needs and purchased at opportune times in this volatile market. Of course, there is always a risk when buying a commodity that far ahead, but it's a risk we're forced to take in today's industry. We're pleased we now have the ability to plan ahead and be

### MANAGER'S MOMENT

by Keith Erickson  
President & CEO  
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prepared for your product needs.

We're also reaping benefits from the addition of the 250-ton pelleter at the feed mill. While there were certainly growing pains as we ramped up feed production with the new equipment (thanks for your patience), our feed mill team has adjusted and we're pleased with the results. Our feed tonnage is up 10,000 tons from a year ago. The new pellet mill is certainly an important part of that equation, but so is an aggressive sales effort. While we continue focusing primarily on retail sales to our area producers, the additional pelleter has allowed us to market feed to wholesale customers as well. It's one more way to add value to your cooperative investment. The purchase of a semi-delivery unit last fall has also helped us haul that feed more efficiently to customers.

At Farmers Ranchers, we continue to look for ways to serve you better, and to keep growing the cooperative you call your own. It's our commitment to you. ■

Our website is sporting a new look. Check it out at  
[www.farmersrancherscoop.com](http://www.farmersrancherscoop.com).

## HELPING LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

Dial 911 in an emergency, and ordinary people set aside their own schedules to lend a hand. These volunteers make a difference by fighting fires, assisting in accidents, and helping in medical emergencies.

Farmers Ranchers has a long history of supporting our region's emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and fire fighters, whether it's hauling water to fires, supplying propane for public events, or providing assistance for training. We also support our many employees who serve on the fire and rescue squads. Naturally, when we were approached to donate for a new piece of equipment, we were happy to respond.

The Ainsworth Ambulance Association is raising funds to purchase a power cot. The power cot, designed to provide lift, allows EMTs to load people into the ambulance with fewer volunteers, and helps avoid back injuries. Farmers Ranchers donated \$500 to the project. "Every year we look for special projects to which we can contribute financially," says CEO Keith Erickson. "This donation will help the EMT's who give so much to us."

The donation was matched by a Land O'Lakes® Foundation grant. Land O'Lakes partners with Farmers Ranchers Cooperative to provide high-quality feed for area producers. The foundation matches donations by

cooperatives to help enhance the quality of life in their communities. "We encourage other local groups or individuals to contribute toward this piece of equipment," says Keith. "The price tag for the power cot is high, and this gift is only the starting point."

Farmers Ranchers appreciates all of our emergency responders, and this is just one way to say 'Thank you.' ■



Farmers Ranchers CEO Keith Erickson and Kent Taylor present the Ainsworth Ambulance Association with a donation to help purchase a power lift. Left to Right: Kent, Brad Fiala, Brad Miller, Keith, and Mike Rudnick.

## AGRONOMY ADVICE by Kenny Eggers, Agronomy Division Manager, [keggert@frcoop.com](mailto:keggert@frcoop.com)



### INTERESTED IN A SEED PLOT TOUR?

This summer's hail storm played havoc with the Farmers Ranchers' seed plot, and we will not be hosting our own seed plot tour this year. However, if producers are interested in seeing a plot with Croplan® and Dekalb® genetics, we'd be happy to put together a tour of the Answer Plot just east of Inman again this year. Give us a call at 402-387-2323, or stop in and put your name on the list.

### Meadow fertilization can still pay

Producers have experienced notable yield differences when they've invested in a meadow fertilization program. However, with the current high cost of fertilizer, does it still make good economic sense? Farmers Ranchers has been working with Extension Agent Dennis Bauer to determine a program that will give you the most bang for your buck. We normally recommend the traditional fertilizer blend of 40-40-0.

However, with the high cost of phosphorus, we're recommending a 30% nitrogen, 0% phosphorus and potassium, and 15% sulfur blend. Prepays will be offered starting September 1.

### Fertilizer updates

We do not expect fertilizer shortages for the 2009 growing year, but we do need to know your anticipated fertilizer needs earlier than in the past. With some in the industry forecasting 88-89 million corn acres next year, and more fertilizer going to China and India, we could see some spot shortages this next spring and summer. I'm glad we have the additional storage tanks this year, which allows us to purchase product ahead.

As our growing season comes to an end, I and the entire agronomy staff would like to thank our customers for helping make this another successful year. ■

## GIVE CALVES A HEAD START

With current cattle prices, this is the year to focus on adding weight to your calves at weaning. To get you headed in the right direction, we continue to offer an excellent fortified creep product. If you bunk feed, we have Land O'Lakes® SteakMaker® Stocker Starter, rich with vitamins and trace minerals—and an economical option to get them started right. It's fortified with yeast, which increases appetite and improves immunity. Stress Care is formulated to provide calves with even more protection and is chock-full of vitamins and organic trace minerals.

We have other excellent weaning products as well, or, if you're looking for a custom product, we can deliver. We'll sit down with you to evaluate your current feed stuffs, and recommend additional inputs to build a complete ration.

### Contract pricing and cake quality

We're finally getting some decent contract prices. The commodity market has been hesitant this year to set contract prices because of fluctuations, but with some competitive pricing now available it's a good time to think about contracting your winter feed needs.

Our cakes can play an important role in your feed ration. The quality of our cake product has greatly improved. As many of you know, we had issues last year with the cakes being too soft. We did trials on the product this summer, and we've had positive results. Give us a call if you'd like to see a sample. Salesmen Mark Stoner or Terry Foxworthy will be happy to stop by so you can give it a try.

by Jackie Lurz  
Valentine Farm Supply Manager  
jlurz@frcoop.com



### Sampling your hay

It's going to be very important to sample your hay this year. In the past, you may have just estimated protein content and fed extra to get by. With today's high protein cost, it makes sense to know exactly what you're dealing with in terms of type and amount of protein.

We have hay probes at each location. Just stop by, pick it up, and then bring your samples back. We'll send them to the lab—you only have to pay the lab fee because we don't charge an extra handling fee. Once you get the samples back, we'll be happy to sit down with you and build a ration to meet your needs. You can also pick up a probe at the Extension office, or get in touch with Mark or Terry.

### Mineral/cake discount available

Mineral prices are on the rise. Phosphorus is taking another big jump, and mineral is estimated to go up another \$120 per ton September 1. To help combat those higher prices, we're offering a discount if you contract both your cake and mineral. Book one ton of mineral for every ton of cake and we'll give you \$5 off the cake price. Come in or call to place your order. ■

## MEET DR. NIELSEN

Farmers Ranchers is pleased to announce a partnership between our Valentine and Ainsworth feed locations and Dr. Angie Nielsen. Angie operates Nielsen Veterinary Service and Consulting out of her Valentine-area ranch home. In our effort to better serve our customers, and Angie's desire to provide ranchers with the best possible animal care while helping to keep their livestock business profitable, Farmers Ranchers will be the location where her customers can pick up their vaccines and prescriptions.

Angie received her DVM from Iowa State University. Experienced in mixed animal practices, she has special interest in beef and horses. She's an alumnus of the Beef Cattle Production Management class in Clay Center, worked for her family cow/calf and feedlot operation, consulted for a ranch, and participated in the Ranch Practicum Class. In 2007, she and her family moved to the Valentine area. She worked part-time for the Cherry County Vet Clinic until starting her own consulting service this year. This summer she completed an extensive equine dental course.

You can contact Angie at her home office at 402-967-3099 or on her cell at 402-322-1197. ■



## LOCATION PROFILE: VALENTINE

### VALUE TO THE CUSTOMER

Walk into the Farmers Ranchers Farm Supply store in Valentine, and you'll soon realize it's a one-stop shop for ranchers in the area. Want vaccines? You'll find them. Need tack? Look no further. Reinforcing your fencing supplies? Stop here. Need to fill up with unleaded? You're in luck. Heck, you can even find attractive Western jewelry for that special someone while you're picking up a bag of chicken feed.

But there's more—much more. The crew at Valentine, led by location manager Jackie Lurz, and backed up by Jerry Duffiel and Nile Gallino, can take your bulk feed orders or load your pickup or trailer with everything from creep feed to minerals, tubs to pet food, and even throw in lawn care products or feed for your favorite horse.

"We really try to meet all of our customers' needs," says Jackie. "Our goal is customer service and bringing value to the producer." An example of this is the new partnership formed with consulting veterinarian Dr. Angie Nielsen (see page 3). Dr. Nielsen's customers will be able to

pick up their animal health products and prescriptions at Farmers Ranchers.

Jackie started in counter sales at Valentine in 2003, and became a manager three years ago. She knows the livestock business, having grown up on a farm/ranch near Taylor and working for the Butler Veterinary Clinic for 10 years. She and her husband, Gerry, and their children now ranch near Valentine. Feed salesman Mark Stoner also works out of the Valentine location.

Farmers Ranchers opened its Valentine feed store and warehouse in 1988, building a new facility east of town on Highway 20 in 1991. Since then, the store has expanded its inventory, including an extensive line of animal health products and fencing equipment.

"As a society, we're losing customer service," says Jackie. "But that's what we're most proud of here. If we don't have a product, we'll get

it in for you. We try to be prompt in answering the phone, meeting you at the dock to load your order, and even pumping the gas for some of our elderly customers when they pull up."

It pays off. "I hear from a lot of people who say we've got great employees," says Jackie. "That's what we're working for." ■



Nile Gallino, Jerry Duffiel, and manager Jackie Lurz take care of their customers at the Feed Store in Valentine.

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# INSIDE

## COMMUNITY COUNTS

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