Nishnabotna Cattle Company Case

Wilbur Shaw

You are Wilbur Shaw. You have farmed in Fremont County for 53 years, and you are interested in a continued structure of independent family farms in your area of the country. Farming is the occupation you chose as a young man, and you would like to continue your involvement in farming. Management of cows has become more interesting as you have been working with an area feeder to finish your calves.

Increasingly, minor aches and pains have caused you to be reluctant to check on your 100-cow herd. Your young neighbor, Steve Greiner, has provided you with information on how the cows are getting along. Steve has fed the cows off and on this winter for you, and you are pleased with his husbandry skills.

The cows will begin calving soon, and you are concerned about how often you will be able to check on the cows. Turning the cows out to pasture will not be a big deal this spring (if it rains), but you are considering selling the cows if the calving season is too tough.

Your cattle working equipment and facilities are better than adequate. Four years ago you renovated an old barn on your home place with a working tub and new chute.

Your hay equipment is worn out, and Steve has been renting your hay ground on shares for the last three years. It will be time to decide whether to plant more hay this spring, and you are leaning towards just cash renting the ground out.

When you asked Steve whether he was interested in renting more crop ground, he told you that he is pretty comfortable with his row crop acres, and not interested in expanding his operation with cash rented ground. He said that he has good hay equipment, has gone to grazing schools, and would like to expand his cattle operation.

You have joked with Steve several times that you think it is just time for you to chuck the mess and get out of farming. He hasn’t said anything significant in response, but you have noticed that he is a bit more serious when he is helping you with the cattle.

You decide to ask him if he has any interest in leasing your herd the next time he comes to help you.

---

1 Created by Tim Eggers, Iowa State University Extension Field Ag Economist, for the 2001 4-State Beef Conference. Additional resources available at www.extension.iastate.edu/feci/cow-share. Inspired by Ugli Orange case study from George Mason University Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.
Nishnabotna Cattle Company Case ²

Steve Greiner

You are Steve Greiner. You have farmed in Mills County for 8 years, and you are interested in generating sufficient profits to keep your family in farming. You worked at a hydraulic fittings plant after school and grew your farming operation to the point that it is a full time occupation in 1996. You got out of pork production in early 1998, and bought 25 cows to bring your herd up to 56 cows. You see opportunities in beef systems in the future, and would like to grow your beef operation. A challenge is that you would like to ease into increasing your herd size. The losses incurred in your pork operation still sting.

In your spare time you have helped your neighbor, Wilbur, with his herd. He is a nice guy, and you get along well with him. Wilbur has hinted that he would be willing to rent his ground to you to help you expand your operation. Wilbur is renting his ground to a farmer who has grown a bit too quickly for his tastes. As much as it seems that Wilbur wants to rent the ground to you, he sure doesn’t want to drop the rent any. Discussion about crop-share rents hasn’t gotten anywhere.

You currently rent pasture, and just can’t find additional pasture to grow your operation. For the past three years, you have been getting hay from a share leasing arrangement with Wilbur. The past two winters have been mild, and you haven’t had to buy hay. This winter, hay is a concern. You and Wilbur have discussed hay availability, and you are concerned that Wilbur may want to cash rent his hay ground next year. He has talked about selling his cows, and while you are interested, you think that current prices are too high.

You are trying to think of a way to approach Wilbur about share-leasing his cows. You are willing to provide the labor, share in the management, and cash rent his hay ground. A sticking point for you is his pasture. Wilbur doesn’t manage his pastures close enough for your taste, and you would need to figure out a way to rent his pasture without offending him.

Wilbur has different ideas on how calves should look, and you would like for him to take supplemental feed costs. His main criticism of your operation is that you don’t creep feed your calves.

² Created by Tim Eggers, Iowa State University Extension Field Ag Economist, for the 2001 4-State Beef Conference. Additional resources available at www.extension.iastate.edu/feci/cow-share. Inspired by Ugli Orange case study from George Mason University Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.