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Our First Responders Give Back

On most days of the week you can find Scott Fuelberth behind the wheel of a Farmers Ranchers applicator or agronomy truck—except when he’s heading to a fire or educating children on fire safety.

This 22-year-old is a dedicated member of the Ainsworth Volunteer Fire Department. As he explains, he’s following a family tradition. “A lot of family members have been volunteer firemen,” says Scott, including a great grandfather, grandfather, great uncle and stepfather. Scott says he joined the volunteer fire department four years ago. This past fall, he also became a driver for the Brown County Ambulance.

Scott is one of several Farmers Ranchers’ employees who serve as first responders to emergencies in and around our communities. Darlene Miller, secretary at the co-op’s main office in Ainsworth, has been an EMT for the Brown County Ambulance service for more than 16 years. She remembers what first sparked her interest: While working at another business, she was asked to sit with someone in need until the ambulance arrived. “I had that little inkling that I’d like to do this,” says Darlene.

Joe Kronhofman and Derek Fernau both work at the Ainsworth Feed Mill; Joe as a truck driver and Derek on inside operations. “I love being on the department,” says Joe. “It’s a great way to help out the community.” Derek joined when friends asked if he’d be interested. In addition to Scott, two more of the co-op’s agronomy staff donate their time and skills to fire-fighting. Agronomy Division Manager Justin Nelson has volunteered for the Ainsworth fire department for close to 14 years, and Lane Johnson volunteers at the Johnstown Volunteer Fire Department.

“I’ve always wanted to be a part of something good for the community,” says Scott. “And the community—and Farmers Ranchers—has great support for us.” Farmers Ranchers also has a great deal of respect for all employees

who give of their time and dedication to volunteer efforts. Says Administrative Coordinator Bryce Hasenohr, “We’re very proud of the way our employees give back.”



Farmers Ranchers employee and volunteer fireman Scott Fuelberth makes dressing like a real fireman a reality for Ainsworth preschooler Henry Mashburn, son of fellow employee Joe Mashburn, during Fire Prevention Week in October.



Trailhead

Winter 2017

Mindset of Strength

BY KENT TAYLOR, President & CEO, ktaylor@frcoop.com



For several years, I have had the privilege of sharing our business successes in the year-end issue of *Trailhead*. After all, during the previous seven years, Farmers Ranchers Cooperative experienced the best results in its 100-year history.

So, as your cooperative closed out the fiscal year on Aug. 31, 2017, the year-end numbers certainly were not the results we had planned for, or experienced, in the past. Here is the summary of the year:

- Total Company Sales: \$44,278,675
- Local Net Loss: (\$566,501)
- Total Net Savings: \$9,504

The total net amount includes patronage we receive from large regional cooperatives like CHS and Land O'Lakes; it also includes the payments required for federal/state taxes. I would encourage you to pick up a copy of the annual report at any of our locations or view it on our website at www.frcoop.com.

Clearly, this is not where we wanted to finish when we set our goals and plans for 2016-2017. There is no doubt that the tougher economic times in agriculture have impacted the cooperative and our local communities. As a co-op, we are also showing a lot of depreciation from recent expansion projects. In the past 10 years, the cooperative has made capital investments of \$30.8 million, investments that will continue to serve this region for several generations. It's also important to know that

the current cash flow is good as we prepare for the future, and your board and management are continually looking for ways to become more efficient while improving our service to you, our patrons.

The cooperative has returned \$6.85 million to members over the last 10 years through its 65-year-old member redemptions, patronage payments and estate settlements. The board has maintained an outlook that, when possible, money in our patrons' hands is a great economic boost to our region. So, even though there will not be any yearly patronage checks this year, the board plans on staying current with estates and 65-year-old requests.

Where does this leave us? It's a situation no different than what generations before us experienced over the last 100 years of Farmers Ranchers Co-op—with a mindset that we will make it through this cycle in agriculture and come out stronger on the other side. At our leadership retreat in September, Board Chairman D.J. Hladky challenged the board and leadership team to confront these realities, as he encouraged us with this reminder, "There are a lot of things out of our control in life, but we can choose our mindset every day." Agriculture will improve and we must do what is necessary to make it through this cycle. The assets and people of Farmers Ranchers Co-op are in place for the present and future. As always, if you have any questions, feel free to visit with me. I would welcome the opportunity.

Thanks for your business. And, from all of us at Farmers Ranchers Cooperative, have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Apply for FRC Scholarship. Go to frcoop.com/scholarship.

Fall Meeting Wrap-up

BY DR. JENNIFER YOUNG, Beef Cattle Nutritionist



This fall, the Farmers Ranchers feed team took to the road and hosted feeder meetings in Nebraska and South Dakota. This year, we teamed up with Alltech®, Elanco, Micronutrients and Zinpro to communicate valuable information and provide insight to our customers.

Farmers Ranchers has hosted similar meetings over the past three years, and they have gained in popularity each year. The feed team would like to sincerely thank all of the sponsors and customers who made these meetings such a success! In case you were unable to join us at a meeting in your area, we'd like to provide highlights.

Alltech's Kade Scott provided a closer look at the use of Bio-Mos® and its inherent advantages, including:

- Improved colostrum quality
- Improved feed intake and average daily gain
- Immune system support
- Reduced scours
- Reduced respiratory disease
- Decreased morbidity and mortality.

Gary Tibbetts, Ph.D. with Zinpro, shared the economic advantage of using Availa-4® and how that can impact Generational Nutrition®. Dr. Tibbetts also touched on the value of supplementing with cobalt. Information he shared included:

- Generational Nutrition is a term used to describe how maternal environment can have a permanent effect on developing offspring.
- Supplementing Availa-4 to cows in last trimester:
 - o Improved colostrum antibodies
 - o Increased weaning weights of calves.
- Improved reproduction of cows and fertility of bulls with Availa-4.
- Cobalt stimulates rumen microbes and alters microbial populations to enhance fiber digestion.

Farmers Ranchers' Jennifer Young, Ph.D., discussed current and future cattle inventories. Dr. Young also commented on the U.S. and world beef markets, exploring trade and global demand of beef.



Don't Delay Meadow Fertilization

BY JUSTIN NELSON, Agronomy Division Manager, jnelson@frcoop.com



We're not anxious for winter's cold temps, but, once that ground is frozen, we are anxious to get fertilizer on your meadows. Warmer winter temps the last few years have slowed our ability to get out on your acres, but we're hoping we'll have windows of opportunity in December through February.

To encourage you to get on our meadow fertilization list early, we're offering a delayed billing option. Get on our schedule now and once that ground is solid we'll be going strong to handle the acres for our customers. With delayed billing, you won't have to pay until after the first of the year.

Let's plan for nutrient needs in 2018

At Farmers Ranchers, our goal is to have inventory on hand to take care of our customers' needs. That's especially

important when it comes to fertilizer for the 2018 growing season. We invite you to come in with your crop plans. We'll help determine your nutrient needs and an estimated per-acre cost. That crop planning also helps ensure we're ordering the fertilizer we'll need when application time comes. You can also take advantage of our pre-pay options—available from December to mid-January.

Most of our customers have already put in orders for their seed needs, but, if you still need seed, check in with us. We may still have pre-pay options available.

Watch for Answer Plot® event

Farmers Ranchers will again be hosting a Winfield® United Answer Plot® event this winter to share valuable research data. Watch for more information coming your way.

Kohl Headlines Young Producer Event

Farmers Ranchers is excited to announce that the distinguished agricultural economist David M. Kohl, Ph.D., will be the keynote presenter during the cooperative's fourth annual Young Producer Event. "We've been working to bring Dr. Kohl to this event for the past few years and we were finally successful in making the schedules work," says Farmers Ranchers Administrative Coordinator Bruce Hasenohr. "We wanted to bring his enthusiasm and talent to this program."

Dr. Kohl is professor emeritus in the Agricultural and Applied Economics Department at Virginia Tech. For 25 years, Kohl was professor of Agricultural Finance and Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

Throughout his professional career he has traveled over 9 million miles, conducted more than 6,000 workshops and seminars for agricultural groups,

published four books, written thousands of articles on financial and business-related topics, and received 11 major teaching awards. Kohl is currently president of AgriVisions, LLC, a knowledge-based consulting business providing cutting-edge programs to leading agricultural organizations worldwide.

The Young Producers Event was initiated in 2015 with the goal of providing a venue where producers age 40 and younger can network, enjoy a good meal, and receive valuable information on topics that impact their businesses.

The Young Producers Event will be at the Ainsworth Community Center on Thursday, Jan. 4, 2018. Dr. Kohl will be headlining the event with an optional workshop at 4 p.m. and keynote presentation at 7 p.m. following a social hour and dinner. Watch for additional details and RSVP information as the event nears.



Ag Economist Dr. David Kohl will headline the 2018 Young Producers Event on Jan. 4.

Why Propane Leak Checks Matter

BY DAVID DODSON, Propane Department Manager, ddodson@frcoop.com



Propane is a safe, economical, clean-burning and versatile fuel when properly used. Propane gas leaks are rare, but proper precautions are essential. One of those precautions is a propane leak check by a trained professional—like our Farmers Ranchers propane delivery personnel.

What is a leak check?

The leak check is a control mechanism to ensure the integrity of the piping system from your propane tank to your appliances. NFPA 58, the Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code for the National Fire Protection Association, is the industry benchmark for safe LP-Gas storage, handling, transportation and use. It states residential properties should be leak checked every five years.

In addition to that, you should also perform these checks anytime there is an interruption of propane service, including:

- If your tank runs out of gas
- Someone shuts off the tank
- A new propane-fueled appliance is installed
- A new tenant moves into a rental property that has propane service
- Someone suspects a gas leak.

It is also important to check the regulators on your propane tank. While most regulators have a 25-year lifetime, it is a mechanical device which can malfunction with wear and tear.

If a propane leak check has not been performed on your propane system in the past five years, or if you experience one of the scenarios listed here, please contact your Farmers Ranchers propane department, and we'll schedule the maintenance and safety check. Except for emergency situations, the best time to do a leak and regulator check is spring through fall.

Remember, propane is an exceptional and economical energy source. Let's keep you enjoying the warmth and efficiency of propane, safely. Call us at 402-387-1220 or 800-233-6627 (Ainsworth), or 402-376-2060 or 800-557-3732 (Valentine) to schedule a propane leak check.

