

Cornhusker Economics

Women in Agriculture: The Heart of the Farm

Market Report	Year Ago	4 Wks Ago	5-1-17
Livestock and Products,			
Weekly Average			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.	123.79	124.00	127.93
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.	179.32	166.78	187.47
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.	148.94	137.77	155.41
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.	215.51	217.15	219.56
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated	70.35	60.99	57.50
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass 51-52% Lean.	81.76	75.47	73.65
Slaughter Lambs, woolled and shorn, 135-165 lb. National.	132.10	145.56	158.89
National Carcass Lamb Cutout FOB.	241.09	347.91	369.82
Crops,			
Daily Spot Prices			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.	3.80	2.84	3.34
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Columbus, bu.	3.60	3.34	3.38
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Columbus, bu.	9.56	8.47	8.75
Grain Sorghum, No.2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.	5.66	5.17	5.54
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, Mn, bu.	2.57	2.90	2.97
Feed			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.	128.00	128.75	131.72
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.	80.00	67.50	70.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.	85.00	65.00	62.50
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture Nebraska Average.	128.50	100.50	104.25
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture Nebraska Average.	49.50	42.50	41.00
* No Market			

Women in Agriculture: The Heart of the Farm was the theme of the 32nd Nebraska Women in Agriculture (WIA) Conference, February 23-24, 2017 in Kearney. This annual conference is hosted by the Department of Agricultural Economics, Nebraska Extension and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR). The Nebraska WIA program is committed to providing opportunities for all Nebraskans to develop risk management skills by providing tools for sound business decisions in every facet of agriculture through leadership, advocacy, and networking avenues.



Over the years each conference has had its own unique characteristics and in 2017 this was no different. There were a wide variety of topics presented and discussed with a late winter Nebraska snowstorm looming as well! Topics ranged from basic grain marketing to farm and non-farm cost control, crop insurance updates to plant nutrition, PRF and Annual Forage Insurance to 2017 tax planning and then identifying personal stress and depression. Many speakers were Educators and Specialists from Nebraska Extension but others were professionals working in the agriculture industry such as marketing specialists, bankers, mental health professionals and crop insurance agents.

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Ronald Hanson was the conference keynote speaker and spoke with an emphasis on “Continuing the Nebraska Legacy of Family Farming and Ranching.” Dr. Hanson is a recently retired Harlan Agribusiness Professor Emeritus who taught thousands of agricultural economics students during his exceptional tenure at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Many participants or their family members were former students of Dr. Hanson during his career at Nebraska. In addition to teaching, Ron has counseled Nebraska farm families for more than 40 years helping them resolve family conflicts in a positive manner and improve family relations through better communication. In addition to his keynote address, he also presented two concurrent workshops during the conference. The capstone speaker was Amanda Freund a young dairy farmer from East Canaan, Connecticut. She encouraged participants to connect with other aspiring women producers as role models and mentors and connect across the generations. Giving more women the support and encouragement to become part of agriculture will help to counter the loss of farms across the country as well as connect consumers better with our farms and ranches. She successfully works with her family managing three unique farm businesses in Connecticut; a dairy farm, a farm market with a greenhouse, and a production facility manufacturing a value-added product called CowPots www.cowpots.com.

In 2017, 260 women attended the conference representing a wide variety of agricultural backgrounds and demographics. The main reason attendees state for attending the conference each year is the opportunity to network and spend time with friends and colleagues, all the while discussing issues important to them as Nebraska agricultural producers. Participants were from all corners and most counties of Nebraska but others made the trip from Kansas, Colorado, South Dakota, Iowa, and Missouri. Of those who responded, 21 percent were under age 30, 15.9 percent age 30-39, 17.4 percent age 40-49, 25.7 percent age 50-59 and 20 percent were 60 and over. The average age of those attending was 47.5 years of age and the age range was 19 to 71. It is important to note the increase in young women under the age of 30 attending this year’s conference. This is partly due to the fact that the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) played a large role in encouraging students to attend, but also because younger women are playing a vital role in the agriculture industry. The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture and

Southeast Community College both sponsored students to attend the conference. The majority of attendees have attended at least four conferences and one person has attended every conference since 1985.



Other interesting statistics show that of those attending the 2017 conference, 50 percent were employed off the farm. Traditionally, spouses who work off the farm do so not only for the additional income but for the health insurance benefits it offers the family. Those attending report that they are responsible for an **average** of 1,101 acres of row crops (corn and soybeans), 721 acres of small grains (popcorn, millet, wheat, sugar beets, rye, sunflowers, cane), 1,885 acres of feed, 3,252 head of swine and 838 cow/feeders. Note: At this time of year and with an impending snowstorm many ranchers chose not to attend the conference because they were in the middle of calving, which contributed to livestock numbers being low.

The main goal of the conference is to heighten participants’ skills and business knowledge and provide them with information they will take back to their agricultural operation. Many women report that they take the information gained from networking, concurrent workshop sessions and the keynote speakers back to their farm or ranch and review it with their partners. Together they evaluate and decide if they will implement any changes in their operation.

After the conference, on a scale of 1 (little change) to 5 (substantial change), participants reported a 4.54 change in their knowledge on specific topics, a 4.36 change in enhancing their business skills and abilities, and an attitude change of 4.25. Attendees also reported their interest in various agricultural topics at 4.4, and they want to know much more. Their confidence level using this in-

formation and knowledge was reported at 4.4. A six month follow-up evaluation will be done on-line with this year's conference participants.

Teaching and encouraging leadership skills is something highly valued in women's programming and especially at these WIA conferences. Participants are given the tools and skills to go back to their communities and become active leaders by telling their own agriculture stories to those not involved in agriculture, taking ownership in various community activities and becoming part of the growing agriculture industry. Valerie Bayes from Monsanto and Shawna Beattie from Nebraska CommonGround spoke about the importance of *telling your own ag story* and becoming involved in your rural community. Barbara Batie is involved in the Nebraska Sesquicentennial celebration and filled participants in on what is planned for the year and what they can do to get involved.



The future success of the conference depends on continued funding from our sponsors. We were honored to have Farm Credit Services of America as the premier sponsor for Ron Hanson and Monsanto for Valerie Bayes as well as USDA Risk Management Agency. Silver sponsors included Flint Hills Resources, NRCS, Reinke Irrigation, Inc., and Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation and Federation. There were various agricultural business and government agencies sponsoring at other levels along with over 30 exhibitors.

The WIA program has had a profound impact on the lives of many women and agricultural operations in Nebraska over its 32 years. The involvement of women in agriculture nationwide and in Nebraska has increased in recent years. According to the 2012 Ag Census, there are approximately 47,000 operators in Nebraska-- 20,000 are women who partner with their spouses or other business partners. In addition, 4,091 women are the primary operators of their agricultural operation. Many women comment that business and estate planning is an issue that is the most difficult to tackle with their partners and family members, but is the most important.

A few comments from this year's attendees are below:

- "I need to budget my personal money better."
- "I will take more interest in crop insurance. I will make a personal budget sheet, use benchmarking, and start a succession plan."
- "I love this conference. It is the only time I get to learn about the business end of farming and feel empowered to do so. The information I learn makes me feel my role is important in our operation."
- "I received encouragement for what I do. Thank you!"
- "This reassured me that this is the career I want to be in and I'm proud to be part of it." (College student)

For more information on this conference and the WIA program see our webpage, <http://wia.unl.edu> or follow us on Twitter, [@newomeninag](https://twitter.com/newomeninag) and like us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/NebraskaWIA. Plans are already underway for the 2018 conference which will be held again in Kearney on February 22-23.

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