

Goal Setting for Livestock Producers

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We make decisions every day which affect our lives. Most of the decisions we make are in reaction to life. This type of decision making may not get us where we want to go with our livestock business. Being proactive instead of reactive will allow us to reach our goals. Usually someone starting a business has an idea of where they would like to end up and the successes they will reach which is the first step in goal setting.

Envision what your day-to-day work on the business looks like and what the end success looks like. What values drive you that may affect your business? Create your own personal vision of what your daily activities look like and what does your successful business might look like in 5, 10, or 20 years. Next, write goals that will get you to your vision. Goals help direct what you do each day to help you be successful. They can help monitor your progress. Regularly review and update your goals. Writing down your goals will formalize your thoughts into action steps. Goals will help guide your actions instead of just reacting to problems. To get started on goals write down your vision, set priorities, list specific tasks, and describe what a successful business means to you. Make sure you include others' (family members, partners) visions if you will count on their help.

The goal statement should be clear and accurate. The acronym that is often used to

describe the components of a good goal statement is SMART – Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time Constrained. It should clearly state the goal, include measurable outcomes, describe activities, be practical in scope, and have a specific end time.

Goals need to be consistent with your values. Think about the five most important personal values you hold most sacred, the ones you could not live without. Are these congruent with achieving your goals? If not, you may want to rewrite your goal statement because it will interfere with your commitment to your goals.



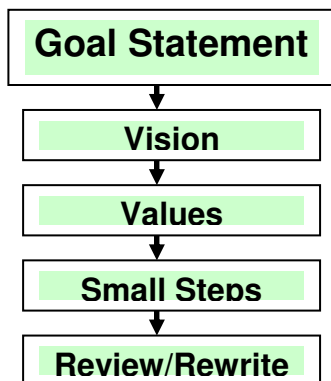
Creating many small goals or steps within the goal statement is important so that it is more manageable. Otherwise the goal may seem overwhelming. When setting small goals or steps these questions can be helpful to think about: What information, knowledge, and skills do I need? What assistance do I need? What resources do I need? What can cause me to not accomplish my goal?

It is also important to set up a detailed timeline to keep on track. A timeline will

help you hold yourself and others accountable to the goal statement and help you feel successful.

The next step is review of the goal statement and rewriting it to make necessary changes. It would be amazing if you could foresee exactly how your plan would turn out and be able to use the same goal statement through the life of your business. Things change and resources change. Just be careful not to change goals just to react to problems. Do not rewrite goals on a day you feel overwhelmed.

A realistic, clear goal statement, congruent with your values, will help you take your business where you want it to go.



Some resources that may be helpful are:

"How to Establish Goals: A Group Project for Farmers and Their Families". John Lamb, 1998, The Minnesota Project, 14 pages.

<http://www.mnproject.org/publications/wfpbook2.PDF>

"Strategic Planning: Drafting a Blueprint for Your Farm Business"

www.smallfarmsuccess.info/management/print_670.cfm

"Farm and Ranch Strategic Planning (Vision and Goal Setting)" Kansas State University,

<http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/agec2/mf2695.pdf>

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