



Spring  
Farm &  
Ranch

# Selling a Farm or Ranch

**F**or many, farming is a way of life. However, the years of waking up before the sun and performing backbreaking work in extreme heat can take its toll. If you're ready to close the door on the rewarding life of being a farmer and begin your next chapter, there are several ways to make a sale quick and painless.

The first step should be finding out if you are legally able to sell your property, especially in family farms which have been handed down for generations.

To avoid delays as you begin the sales process, it's a good idea to confirm everything is in good standing with a lawyer.

Here are some other tips to keep in mind.

## THE EXPERTS YOU NEED

Selling your farmland is a task best tackled with the help of experts. Consider hiring these professional services to make the journey less of a headache.

**Accredited rural appraiser:** Gain a valuable perspective of the value of your farmland. Appraisers have the expertise to analyze both production agriculture, recreational ranches and structures on the land.

**Real estate agent:** Once you get a general idea of what your property is worth, discover your listing price with this professional. They have information regarding comparable sales in your community.

**Accountant:** When selling a farm, taxes can be unique and difficult to understand without the help of an expert. Ensure everything is legally tight before selling it to a new owner.



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## TAKE ATTRACTIVE PICTURES

According to the National Association of Realtors, in 2017, 51 percent of homebuyers first found the property listed through online ads. This type of medium as just

as important when selling your farm and property.

Make sure to take plenty of pictures showcasing your land in the best light. Consider taking advantage of affordable drones or pursue other avenues to produce

beautiful aerial displays, showcasing the entirety of your listing.

## PROVIDE ENOUGH INFORMATION

You don't need to reveal all your information regarding

yield history, included equipment or your farm statistics on your initial ad. However, it is a good idea to disclose this data to your real estate agent, so they can have answers on hand to satisfy interested parties.

# Entice Guests to Your Ranch

Spring is a popular season to welcome new guests into your dude ranch. The weather is warming up, your livestock are becoming more active and the overall spirit is just better as warm weather returns. Make a splash this season by enticing new visitors to check out the space you worked hard to maintain all winter.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

According to the Dude Ranchers' Association, the boom of these unique operations date way back the 1880s due to the post-Civil War cattle boom. Considered the first official dude ranch, the Custer Trail Ranch was born in the Dakota Badlands by brothers Howard, Alden and Willis Eaton. Word of its relaxing lifestyle, ample fishing and successful hunting grounds quickly spread, and they were soon welcoming guests from the east, including Teddy Roosevelt.

Before long, guests realized the burden the brothers were faced with financially and offered to pay for room and board and other amenities. Just like that, a new form of hospitality began, and dude ranches have been going strong ever since.

If you are looking for ways to spruce up your land and attract more visitors, remember these tips from the NDA.

## CONSIDER YOUR AMENITIES

Operating a dude ranch requires more than simply owning a few horses and offering guests room and board. These days, the idea of a staycation at a luxurious property means as an owner you must provide exceptional amenities



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to stand apart.

Consider your hospitality levels. Do you offer several rooms to house multiple groups at once? If so, make sure your guests have their own privacy. Whether they are in common areas or their living

quarters, they want to feel like they have their own space to enjoy their visit. Feel free to brag about the amount of freedom you offer guests on social media and travel websites; it's an important factor when considering where to stay.

## HORSE RIDING

Most people think of hitting the trails when they plan a dude ranch trip. Ensure you have horses who are comfortable performing under different riding conditions. You should be able to offer animals

who can handle beginners and experts. Don't forget to have a backup plan if weather conditions halt a horseback journey. Your alternate ideas could include a sightseeing tour or an indoor dance or social night for large groups.

# Managing Mud on a Cattle Farm

If you are experienced in the cattle industry, you have likely well-versed in the problem a spring thaw creates. However, for those new to the lifestyle, you may be overlooking a troubling situation that places your herd and bottom line at risk. Learn how to manage one of the often-forgotten farming challenges, mud.

Sloppy ground conditions create the risks of animals becoming stuck or injuring themselves. It's important to maintain a head count and have an efficient way to search your land if you notice inventory is off. An easy way to gain an eagle-eye perspective of your entire property is by investing in a video drone. Farmers can take advantage of this innovative technology for many different situations they face.

Here are some helpful tips from the Mississippi State University Extension to keep your cattle and bottom line in good shape.

## ANALYZE SOIL CONDITIONS

Get an expert to analyze the soil and slope conditions on your property. Once you discover which areas of your land are more susceptible to creating muddy conditions, it's crucial to limit the access your herd has to these locations. Here are a few ways to help keep your cattle safe from injury or discomfort when mud levels are present in high-traffic areas.

Consider temporarily moving feeding locations, watering areas or other places on your farm that your cattle frequently visit.

Construct a permanent solution to muddy areas, like



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ground coverings of concrete or geotextile fabric. Make sure you cover the space efficiently, so the wet ground doesn't surround the new structure.

## MUD AND BREEDING SUCCESS

Breeding is an important

component to every cattle farm. The muddy conditions introduced by spring can have detrimental results if not taken seriously. When walking through just four to eight inches of mud, the MSUE says cattle's dry matter intake is reduced by a significant 15 per-

cent over dry conditions. When they exert too much energy living their daily lives, breeding efforts are slowed significantly or nonexistent.

Mud is also dangerous for new calves who may find themselves stuck or feeding off contaminated udders which

affect their hygiene. If applicable, keep your cattle and their calves in dry conditions away from general public of your herd. You can keep an eye on their growth progress and ensure they don't find themselves in danger during the spring thaw.

# Safety in Severe Weather

In many locations, March is known for its early-frigid temperatures and ending with more suitable farming weather as the calendar turns. With this introduction to warmer conditions, the risks of severe weather become more prominent.

Does your farm have an emergency weather plan? If forecasts show incoming conditions may be severe, you should have a strategy to protect the investments on your property. Be prepared for the numerous natural risks that put you and your farm or ranch in danger.

## TORNADOES

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the United States sees an average of 1,253 tornadoes per year. While protecting your herd during these conditions can be a struggle and dangerous to your personal safety, employing your emergency strategy at the earliest sign of potential severe weather will enhance your chances of a positive outcome.

Here are some tips to follow from the Center for Food Security and Public Health on how to protect your livestock before, during and after a tornado.

**Before:** Create a list of the animals on your farm and their location on the property. All livestock should have a permanent form of identification. Designate a safe shelter for animals to wait out the storm and ensure there is backup generators in place to perform farm operations.



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**During:** Never leave animals restrained outside during a tornado. If possible, they should be in a structure away from windows with plenty of food and water. Their behavior may change as livestock can sense severe weather in advance.

**After:** Assess the storm damage and perform an inventory of your animals. You

should examine them closely for injury and call a veterinarian immediately if it is severe.

## LIGHTNING

This element is more unpredictable than tornadoes and can be devastating to a farm. The United States Department of Agriculture recommends operators install lightning-protection systems

to dissipate its effect on metal structures and equipment. Consider it an efficient security measure to dissipate the electrical charge by sending it to a ground. It's a good idea to include buildings with a metal roof and silos near power lines or trees. Contact the Lightning Protection Institute to find a certified installer in your area.

## INSURANCE

Spring weather introduces risks of farms losing important components to their operations. In addition to employing an emergency management plan, acquiring insurance adds even more protection. Inquire with a professional about the coverage you need to keep crucial pieces of the puzzle protected.

# Time for a Spring Cleaning

**A**s the busy season of farming rolls in, don't forget to perform important spring cleaning around your property.

Before planting or giving animals free reign, you should ensure any obstructions caused from winter weather are managed and housing is prepared safely for livestock.

## **ANALYZE PROPERTY**

Once the weather warms, you should assess your property for signs of damage from the winter. Make sure your security fence is in good shape and complete any necessary repairs before allowing livestock to roam. Wooded areas should also be scrutinized for signs of downed trees as they could create tripping hazards for animals or slow down planting efforts if crops are nearby.

## **CLEANING THE BARN**

If you found yourself ignoring the cleanliness of your barns during the winter, spring is the time to whip it into shape. If possible, ensure all livestock is away from the area so they aren't exposed to dusty conditions you may stir up. Try to keep windows and doors open and take advantage of ventilation systems if available.

Spring is a good time to sanitize things like feeding buckets, feed bins and watering tools that collected debris throughout the cold. Replace

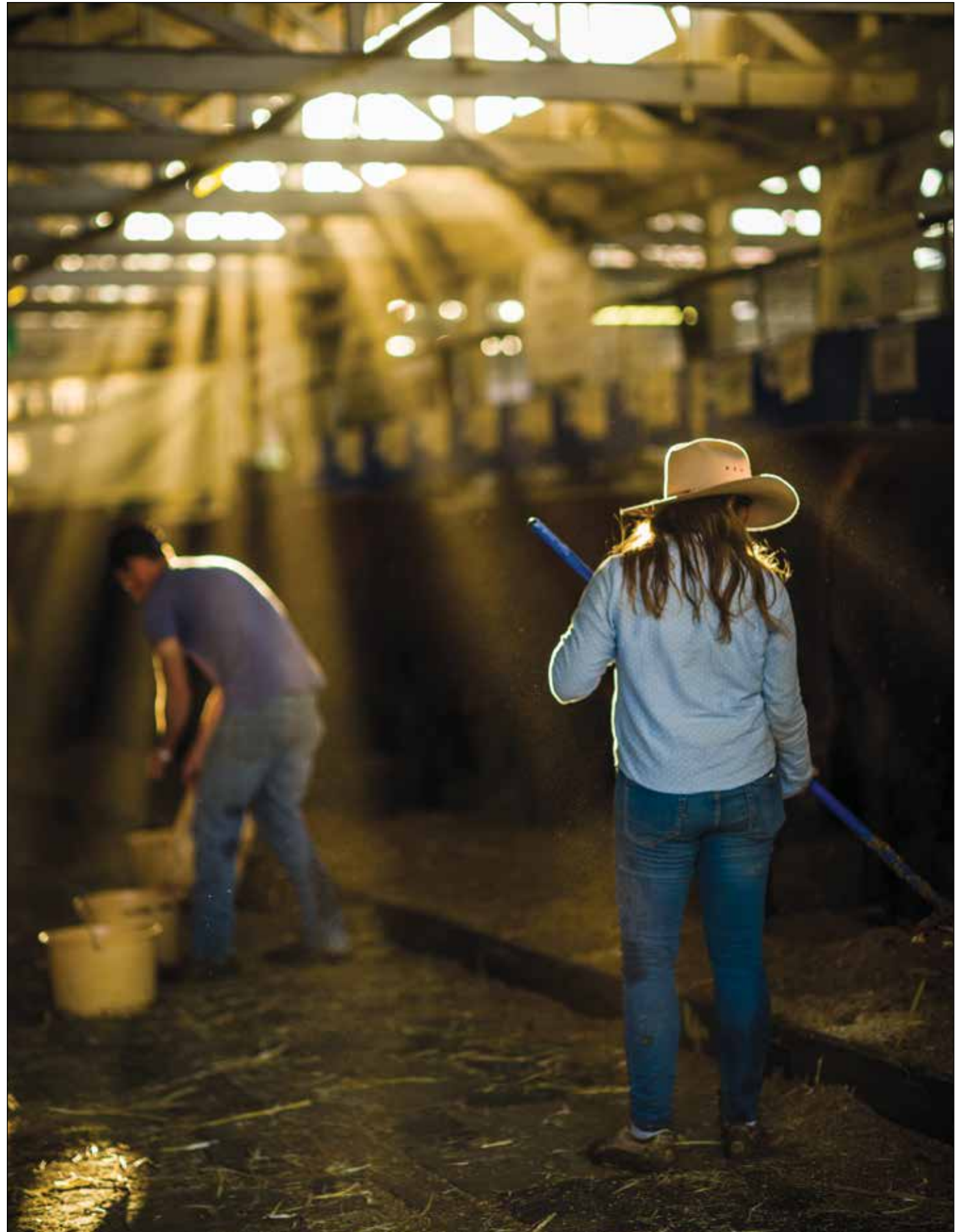
all bedding in stalls with fresh materials and check for signs of pests who made themselves at home when escaping frigid temperatures.

If rodents or other invasive animals are present, it's crucial to inspect wiring for damage. If you aren't familiar with making electrical repairs, it's important to employ the help of a certified electrician. According to the National Fire Preventative Association, most barn fires occur during the months of January, February and March as heating devices are more apt to be used. Ensure your electrical system is in working order to avoid a disaster this spring.

## **POWER WASH EQUIPMENT**

If your available space demands that you store important farm equipment outdoors during the winter, you should power wash them before operation. Eliminate any debris that may be around from last season like mud, leaves and ensure the undercarriage has been hosed down.

If you have a large fleet which requires cleaning, consider hiring a professional service to complete the service so you can focus on your operation.



# Horse Safety on the Ranch

**T**here are numerous factors to consider when running a successful guest ranch. Of course, you will want to ensure guests are entertained and receiving quality hospitality — but the number one concern should be their safety. Ensure the horses on your property are trained and well-behaved around unfamiliar faces.

If the animals on your ranch remained in their stables through a tough winter, be sure to freshen up their training before guests arrive. Remember, your beloved animals are also a source of revenue for your operation. A negative reputation for having unruly horses can cripple the reputation of your ranch.

## SPRING CONDITIONING

Thanks to modern technology, everyone who visits your property is eager to share their experience through social media, review websites and word of mouth. You can spend time creating the perfect atmosphere to excite your guests, but what about the experience they gain from an animal without proper etiquette? They can become a valuable part of your team when you set expectations with the right spring conditioning.

To enhance a horse's bone strength and lung capacity, consider these workout techniques from the experts at Horse Journals. Make sure to follow each of these routines with five minutes of light calisthenics.

**Week 1:** Use a moderate pace to walk on flat ground for 30 minutes, three times per week.

**Weeks 2-3:** On flat ground, perform a moderate pace for 40 minutes, three times per



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week.

**Weeks 4-5:** Increase pace to a moderate walk/trot on flat ground at 40-minute intervals, three times per week.

After a schedule of these light exercises, your horse will be more comfortable performing more rigorous training or

hauling guests through rocky hills or trails.

## TRAIN YOUR GUESTS

Before allowing your visitors to hop on a saddle and ride off in the sunset, it's important to introduce them to your horses and give a general training ses-

sion. Here are some great guidelines to express.

Before walking behind a horse, always address them verbally. They should be aware of your presence to avoid them from being caught off guard.

Always wear the proper safety gear when on a saddle.

These include helmets, break-away stirrups and boots.

Encourage guests to stay alert and avoid mind-altering substances before mounting a horse.

Never let a novice rider hit the trails without supervision from a trained professional.

# Building Storage Space

**A**s your operation grows, you likely have the need for more equipment, animal or crop supplies and more livestock housing. Spring is the perfect time to plan construction projects to enhance the functionality of your farm.

You are probably familiar with traditional structures built with wood, steel and concrete. The tried and true construction methods have proven to be great for quality, longevity and operation. But there is a newer contender on the market which you may not be as familiar with.

When creating blueprints for your newest structure, find a contractor in your area who is capable of constructing a fabric building. The benefits are incredible over more classic materials including:

- Less cost for and time during construction;
- High quality material which is easy to relocate if necessary;
- Built tough and withstands inclement weather conditions; and
- Produces better ventilation for both farmers and their livestock.

While this technology isn't necessarily brand new, you may have difficulty finding a professional to construct a fabric building in your area. If this is the case, do research online or ask for references from farmers who have turned to this different style of structure.

## **CONSTRUCTION LOANS**

As a farm operator, you can find a great financing deal by utilizing the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program, offered



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by the United States Department of Agriculture. Check with a representative in your area to find out how to qualify and the stipulations of this low-interest program.

Since the program was created in 2000, it has influenced over 33,000 loans for farms

around the country, resulting in increasing storage capacities to an incredible 900 million bushels. While this particular loan encourages growth in storage buildings, the USDA has several options you may seek for help in acquiring the funds to provide animal or

equipment housing.

## **CONSIDER THE LOCATION**

Your new structure is there to help, so make sure it doesn't get in the way of your daily operations. When choosing the location, consider what the building's purpose will be and

create a construction strategy.

For instance, if the building will require running water or electricity, save money by erecting it near a source. You also will want to avoid building on land that is susceptible to flooding or near power lines and other obstructions.