

COW/CALE CORNER

The American cattle industry might be centuries old, but that doesn't mean professionals should be limited to the marketing techniques of their predecessors. Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and CattleGrower Network are widely used among businesses and individuals involved in all aspects of the livestock industry.

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO

Who's Using It?

Bryan Gill, 34, of Timber Lake, S.D. has been in the livestock industry all his life. The owner of a registered Red Angus ranch, he works with North Dakota-based Pifers Auction and Realty to "manage the livestock marketing end of the business."

Specifically, he said they manage registered

bull and female sales around the country, along with creating ads and catalogs for different breeders.

Ryan Goodman represents a

younger segment of the industry. A 21-year old senior at Oklahoma State University, he's pursuing a degree in animal science production. In addition to his educational pursuits, he assists his family with the operation of a stocker cattle operation and cattle auction barn near Searcy, Ark.

How & Why?

Cattle Grower Network (cattle-grower.com) is a network community for livestock producers to connect, collaborate and promote their operations. In addition to Cattle



Grower, Gill said he uses Ranchers.net, CattleToday.com and Facebook as cost-effective ways to stay in touch with other ranchers around the country.

"It is a nice way to contact other ranchers all over the world without spending a lot of money," Gill said.

Specifically, he has taken advantage of the photo posting features, whereby he can showcase what he has to offer. "With our location in western South Dakota, we don't get a lot of traffic from other



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twitter

approaching issues and insight into how his peers approach these issues, he said.

Success Stories

Social media is only effective if it provides a benefit over standard face-to-face networking. Cattle-Grower has helped Gill connect to his customers virtually. "A couple years ago, I received a phone call from a calf buyer from Nebraska. He saw me talk (on Cattle Grower) about how we are always on the lookout for feeder calf buyers."

As a result of this encounter, Gill made the connection and the sale was finalized.

Benefits

Cari Rincker is a New York City-based attorney with expertise in the use of social media in the agricultural industry. She contends there are several reasons social media is useful in the cattle industry.

"First and foremost, social media is a great way to network," she said.

Regardless of preference, relationships can be cultivated in this digital age through these sites.

Second, social media is the best way to get news and information. The days of Americans leisurely reading the morning newspaper are fading. More and more consumers and producers are getting their news from Twitter and blogs, she said. An easy way to get a daily dose of the latest news is to subscribe to news feeds from news stations, newspapers, magazines, and blogs through Twitter and Facebook.

According to Rincker, social media

is a great way for livestock producers to tell their story to the American public.

"The picture of agriculture that authors like Michael Pollan have painted to the American public are very different from reality," she said. "The true story of the American cattlemen can be told one blog, one tweet, and one Facebook status at a time." ♦

LinkedIn

breeders...so I try to get our photos and info out in front of people as much as I can," he said. "It has really sparked a lot of interest in our program."

Goodman's social media habits are similar: use of Facebook, Blogger, Twitter and Cattle Grower. He had made use of blog postings and forum posts "to communicate with fellow producers and ask their opinions on current topics."

These venues provide a look at how other producers are



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