



Farm Talk

Jerry Webb

Getting started in farming isn't easy, but it isn't impossible — at least not yet.

I read about enough young farmers throughout the country who are managing ways to grab the first rung of the ladder to farming success. Granted, most of them are getting started by working into the family business. But there are some others with no relatives and no prospects for an agricultural inheritance who want to farm. What should they be told?

First of all, they should know it's not easy, but it can be done.

Farming is not a closed business — not this year anyway — and it may not be for several years to come. It takes some finances, some knowhow, a lot of desire and an inordinate amount of faith and courage. A young person with those things going, plus a little patience, can probably get started in farming.

A start in farming doesn't necessarily mean a 500-acre spread, the latest equipment for growing corn and soybeans, and a brand new pickup truck.

It's more apt to be a rundown 50

acres that can be developed into a high risk, high income vegetable business. Or the first step into a swine operation, or maybe it will be home base to an expanding operation that relies on rented land.

There are farmers around who want to bring someone into the business. Farmers who have no offspring interested in farming — who have established a good operation and want to see it continued. And it's just human nature to want to help somebody who's trying to get started.

So combine those two factors — the desire to keep a thriving farm business functioning and the desire to help somebody — and you have the elements needed. It's just a matter of getting the right people together.

In that kind of situation a young person might have to start out as hired labor, doing whatever the farmer wanted done for a year or two until the owner was convinced that this was the right person. Then some sort of deal might develop that would involve shares, buying in, and bonuses for out-

standing efforts. Things like that would allow the young person to use his or her energies to the fullest.

Meantime, the farmer-owner could start to hand over certain responsibilities and take life a little easier, that way gradually working into a retirement posture with a young farmer buying in and providing retirement income. The owner would still be there to give management suggestions, extra labor when needed, and maybe even operating capital.

It's a typical parent-child arrangement without the hindrance of being related. It gives the farmer a chance to "recruit" a successor, something that a lot of farmers don't get a chance to do because they have heirs.

Another way for an enterprising young farmer to get started is through a rental arrangement.

A long-term deal is best and preferably one based on shares. It may be possible to rent a whole farm, equipped and all.

Or, if equipment's the problem, don't let the \$200,000 price tag quoted so frequently be the stopper. Go for good used equipment.

Successful Farming magazine quotes a midwestern auctioneer who says a young farmer can get started with adequate row crop equipment for \$35,000. It won't be the newest or the biggest, but it will be serviceable and with a little winter maintenance can do quite well.

Here's his list: A John Deere 4320 tractor \$11,500, a five-bottom plow, \$1000, an 18-foot disk, \$3000, four-row planter, \$2250, a John Deere 95 combine, \$12,000, miscellaneous tillage and wagons, \$5000. That's a total of \$34,750 — not something you could save out of a year's earnings from an off-farm job, but again not impossible for someone planning ahead.

Beyond land and equipment

there is the tremendous challenge of operating capital. It takes a lot of money to run a farm and in a bad year, it may take more money than expected just to get started again the following season.

Here's where a serious young farmer needs to have a good rapport with a lending institution that understands agriculture and has faith in that person's future.

Want something else to think about?

All of the economic indicators are pointing to some boom years ahead for agriculture. Economists have been talking boom years a long time and there have been a few. But the world food situation is reaching the point where good years in agriculture should outweigh the bad ones by a con-

siderable margin.

The young farmers who went into business in the early seventies thinking it was going to be prosperity from then on got disappointed. And young farmers now who start thinking it's all sunshine and roses will probably be disappointed also.

There are bound to be some ups and downs, but the ups are going to be higher and the downs shouldn't be quite so low. Given decent weather conditions, a young person could start on a shoestring and have a chance.

It won't be easy, but then it never has been. Young farmers of 50 years ago who started as a sharecropper with a team of mules and \$100 thought they had problems too.

Travis joins ag staff

UNIVERSITY PARK — James W. Travis has been appointed to Penn State's College of Agriculture faculty as assistant professor of plant pathology extension, effective February 1.

Thomas B. King, Penn State associate dean for extension, points out Travis is assisting county Extension agents on the management of fruit diseases throughout the state. He also is working on the development of new disease management strategies.

A native of Adams county, he

received a bachelor of arts degree in biology from Gettysburg College in 1975, master of science degree in entomology from Penn State in 1977, and doctor of philosophy degree in plant pathology and horticultural science from North Carolina State University in 1981.

Travis is a member of the American Phytopathological Society, Entomology Society of America, American Horticultural Society, and Phi Kappa Phi honor society.

Del. extension

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example, assume that the supplement tag says the bag contains 1,000,000 IU of vitamin A per pound of premix. Assume also that the tag instructs you to add 10 pounds of supplement to 1 ton of feed. This means there will be 10,000,000 units of vitamin A per ton of feed, or

5,000 IU (10,000,000 divided by 2,000) of A per pound of mixed feed. The gestating sow needs 2,000 IU per pound of ration, so this premix would provide her with more than an adequate amount of this nutrient. Make sure your hogs get adequate amounts of the other vitamins, too.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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