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# Women in Agriculture: Making the Critical Difference

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# CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension

## Women in Agriculture: Making the Critical Difference

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	4/25/14
<b><u>Livestock and Products,</u></b>			
<b><u>Weekly Average</u></b>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight.....	\$128.98	\$153.81	\$146.67
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb.....	171.44	223.70	+
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb.....	137.93	182.59	+
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass.....	191.63	239.57	231.91
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated.....	82.10	129.57	115.42
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean.....	85.76	130.49	116.27
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Wooled, South Dakota, Direct.....	101.00	158.75	146.00
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB.....	288.00	374.28	374.46
<b><u>Crops,</u></b>			
<b><u>Daily Spot Prices</u></b>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu.....	7.03	7.06	7.11
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.....	6.58	4.62	4.85
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Nebraska City, bu.....	14.51	14.17	14.78
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt.....	11.07	8.07	8.52
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN , bu.....	4.23	4.59	4.48
<b><u>Feed</u></b>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton.....	+	195.00	190.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton.....	227.50	127.50	115.00
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Nebraska, ton.....	222.50	107.50	102.50
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average.....	238.50	235.00	235.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average.....	91.00	69.00	68.00
<b>+ No Market</b>			

**Women in Agriculture: Making the Critical Difference** was the theme for the 29<sup>th</sup> Nebraska Women in Agriculture (WIA) Conference, February 20-21, 2014 in Kearney, Nebraska. Nearly 350 Nebraska producers attended the conference which focused on educating, advocating and communicating within the agriculture industry. Drought, untimely snowstorms, volatile markets, farm policy indecisions and health care changes brought much uncertainty to Nebraska farmers and ranchers in the past year. One decision can be the critical difference between profit or loss. Many workshops focused on helping producers decide their own comfortable level of risk.

In the past 30 years, many examples of agricultural programs for women have been developed around the country, beginning with the Nebraska WIA Conference in 1985. For decades, women have been an integral part of the farm and ranch, so why the focus on women's education now? According to Bell (2012), multiple factors affect learning for female producers, which are very different from those affecting males. The woman's brain tends to remember more emotions and details, causing them to have *information integration*; whereas the male brain has more *information processing*, meaning less emotional memory and more analytical activity. As a result, women have more defined language regions than men, making their natural mode of learning the oral exchange (Bell, 2012). Programs such as women's conferences, risk management groups and Annie's Project have been developed to teach hands-on agricultural business skills to women in a manner that appeals to their style of learning. This includes more opportunities for discussion and networking, all in a safe environment where women producers are building confidence and independence. United States Census figures in the last ten years show a substantial increase in female landowners, which includes those that own and operate with their spouse or family members, are absentee landlords or are the sole and primary landowner/operator. Because of this increasing demo-

graphic, the demand for women's programming nationwide, as well as in Nebraska, has increased. University of Nebraska Extension continues to support this programming.

Most attendees at the 2014 conference were from Nebraska, but others made the trip from Kansas, Colorado, Iowa and New Jersey. The average participant was 49.4 years old. With assistance from the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR), the under 25 age group continues to grow each year. Scholarships to attend the conference are available on a competitive basis for CASNR students, as well as other community colleges, FFA and 4-H students. Thirteen students not only actively took part in the conference, they also assisted the conference director by facilitating workshop sessions, as well as other duties. Other items of interest are that 56 percent of the participants work off the farm; 23 percent report they are involved in agricultural advocacy activities; and 36 percent report they are involved in local community leadership activities. Overall, participants represented a total of 170,816 acres of crops (row, small grain, feed, other) and 43,550 head of livestock (cow/calf, feeder, swine, horse, misc.).

The Women in Agriculture Program in Nebraska is committed to providing opportunities for all Nebraskans to develop management skills in every facet of agriculture by providing leadership, learning support and networking avenues. The main goal of the conference is to heighten participants' skills and 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 changes in their operation.

On a scale of 1 (little change) to 5 (substantial change) participants reported an increased 4.37 change in their



Participants enjoying a break and visiting the booths.



All ages of women enjoy the workshops at the WIA Conference.



Keynote Speaker - Jolene Brown

knowledge, a 4.5 change in skills and abilities enhancement and an attitude change of 4.14. Attendees also reported an increased interest in various agricultural topics (4.36), and they want to know much more. Their confidence level to use this information and knowledge was reported at 4.20.

We were honored to have Jolene Brown, a family business consultant as the keynote speaker. Jolene was sponsored by Reinke Irrigation Company. The University of Nebraska Extension sponsored a few of their own – Dr. Chuck Hibberd, Dean and Director of Extension celebrated 100 years of Extension; and Extension Educators, Connie Hancock and Jenny Nixon, along with Extension Specialist Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel led a breakfast discussion on “All for the Love of FOOD.” Jo Bek, a professor from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis, Nebraska, and a producer, gave the capstone address which was sponsored by Farm Credit Services of America. Over 30 concurrent workshops were held during the two-day conference. Sessions dealt with grain marketing, cattle health, business transition/succession and estate planning, farm bill policies, financial planning, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), crop insurance, livestock marketing, family communications, grazing/stocking rates, networking, soil health, starting your own business, ag leasing, apps, Twitter and Pinterest, new healthcare changes, ag advocacy and computer record keeping. Many participants also took

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time out in the evening for relaxing and stress-reducing yoga!

As always, the success of the conference depends on continued funding from our sponsors, which include not only the sponsors noted above but a host of commodity groups and others. A detailed list of sponsors and exhibitors at the conference can be found in the conference book at <http://wia.unl.edu>.

The Women in Agriculture program has had a profound impact on the lives of many women and agricultural operations in Nebraska over 29 years. Many have commented that business and estate planning is an issue they must tackle with their partners and family members.

*"I can now communicate better with my ENTIRE family and will be pursuing business and estate planning again."*

*"We need to finish our transition plan and talk more to our kids about their dreams and goals."*

It has become vitally important that Nebraska producers tell their agricultural story to those who don't understand the way of life on the farm/ranch, and a producer's genuine concern for their livestock and the land they raise their families on. More and more consumer groups are challenging the dedication Nebraska producers have to the agriculture industry. The Nebraska Women in Agriculture program will continue to partner with Commonground, A-FAN and other commodity groups to encourage women to "Tell Their Own Story." A few participant comments were:

*"I will be a better advocate for agriculture."*

*"I will go about my management duties with more knowledge and energy now!"*

In upcoming months, focus groups will be held in each extension district with current and past participants and Extension Educators to establish priorities and topics for upcoming conferences and programming. We will continue to work with Nebraska's agricultural women and help them Make the Critical Difference! Plans are already underway for the 2015 conference, celebrating 30 years of Women in Agriculture in Nebraska. It will again be held in Kearney, Nebraska, February 26-27, 2015. For more information on the recent conference and the Women in Agriculture program, visit us at any of the following:



Taking part in a lively discussion.

Webpage: <http://wia.unl.edu>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NebraskaWIA](http://www.facebook.com/NebraskaWIA)

Twitter: @newwomeninag

Reference:

Bell, S. and J. McAllister, (2012). *Sustainable Agriculture Through Sustainable Learning: Improving Educational Outcomes with Best Practices for Adult Learning*. Burlington, VT: Northeast SARE.

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**women** in  
**AGRICULTURE**