



# FARM MENTORING PROGRAM

AgProfit  
Strategies

## Mentor Guide

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# AgProfit Strategies Mentoring Program

## —For the Mentor—

### Introduction

Farming and ranching require a diverse set of skills, and beginning farmers need people in their corner—mentors and advisers from a wide range of backgrounds who can help them weather challenges and achieve their agricultural goals. Who do they turn to for support? Farmers just like you.

Mentorship is the influence, guidance or direction given by a more seasoned farmer to a young producer getting started. He or she may even have been around agriculture for a few years, but still may need more guidance or another perspective. In a farm setting, a mentor influences the growth of a mentee.

But really, it is as simple as sharing what you know about farming with someone eager to learn from you.

In our program, mentees are chosen from less-seasoned producers who attend one of our farmer educational seminars. They may be interested in grain, livestock or dairy. There are a couple of field days each year, where the mentee visits the mentor's farm to learn how you go about the daily business of running your farm. Along the way, the mentee will ask you questions and seek your advice. You may also hear about his or her experiences so far, which can help you better understand individual strengths and areas for growth.

So, for you, in a nutshell, it's first visiting with the young producer in person on your farm and showing him or her around the operation. Naturally in conversation, the beginning farmer will probably bring up what they're most interested in learning through questions about your place. You can help them by showing them how you do things on your farm, in short what works best for you. You can talk about production, facilities, financial and marketing or other aspects of your farm or ranch. It's a custom approach.

Then after that first day getting to know your operation, your mentee may want to call, email or text you questions as they come to mind. You can simply open the door to them about this and tell them what works best for you.

A few weeks later, they will come back to visit your operation one more time.

Because the individual already has a good understanding about how you do things from the first visit, your mentee may have a lot more questions about specific things on their final visit to your farm. And, if you want to be more flexible and have the aspiring farmer visit your operation more than twice, that's fine too. That's completely up to the two of you.

We've included a laundry list of items you or your mentee may want to cover. This is only to get both of you thinking about what your mentee may want to know more about. You are not obligated to cover all of them.

In conclusion, your knowledge and advice will prove very valuable to younger producers eager to know more about farming. There is a payment of \$400 that will be given to you for your mentoring efforts.

### Mentor Pool Intake Form

\* Required

Name:

What's the best way to contact you? (Please include your phone and/or email to be used.)

How long have you been farming?

What commodity(s) do you farm?

How do you market your farm commodities?

What specific areas can you provide help with?

**Check each item where you can provide some guidance to a younger farmer. Some of the items on the list may seem very introductory, and some more advanced or requiring greater safety precautions.** We expect through this project that some mentees may be first generation farmers, although that's uncommon.

Using and maintaining farm and ranch equipment

Most modes of farming production require the operation of some form of machinery. The success of any operation depends on knowing the condition of your equipment. The operation of large, technical equipment will become part and parcel of the farming and ranching experience for many young agriculturists, and the ability to teach the skills necessary to operate and maintain this machinery is pivotal to the success of your learners. The mentor does not need to expect to train their ag apprentice on all equipment.

Each type of operation will feature equipment unique to its field, and may include:

- Tractors
- Large trucks, e.g. box trucks or dump trucks
- Planters and seeders
- Tillage and harvest attachments
- Cultivation and weed management equipment
- Balers and other hay equipment
- Spray systems
- Fertilizer applicators
- Washing stations
- Milking stands and machines
- Brooding and culling infrastructure
- Livestock handling equipment
- Energy improvement equipment, e.g. digesters, solar panels
- Irrigation systems, e.g. sprinklers, drip tape or flood irrigation

#### Equipment skills

- Truck/tractor/equipment basic operation
- Truck/tractor/equipment troubleshooting and mechanics
- Changing a tire
- Changing the oil
- Operation of hand tools
- Operation of power tools
- Operating manual transmission
- Chainsaw safety/maintenance/operation
- Backing up a trailer
- Basic welding

#### Production Skills – Livestock

Below we list skills that learners on most livestock operations will acquire.

- Animal health and nutrition
- Low-stress animal handling principles
- Feeding and watering: timing, method
- Nutritional needs - different age classes, breeding, lactating, etc.
- Mineral supplementation

- Diseases/conditions and diagnosis
- Basic veterinary procedures (e.g. vaccination, drenches, docking and castration)
- Proactive health management
- Breeding and genetics
- Birthing (calving, farrowing, lambing, hatching, etc.)
- Animals' impact on land, suiting animals to land base

You will most likely want to include many more specific skills depending on the type of operation. For example:

#### **Dairy management**

- Measure and manage pastures for optimal quality and quantity
- Manage cattle appropriately-heifers/dry cows, calves, milking cows
- Manage milking operations
- Assess dairy nutritional needs
- Evaluate grazing and dairy farm information for effective decision making
- Manage soil and water resources for productivity and health
- Manage farm business operations profitably

#### **Pasture and grazing management**

- Basic soil health/ecology
- Grass, plant, and forage identification
- Forage availability: cool and warm season grasses
- Forage nutritional quality: lignification
- Forage sampling and analysis
- Making a grazing plan (stocking rate and animal density; herd effect, animal impact; time - overgrazing and undergrazing)
- Critical periods: lambing/kidding/calving; breeding; water availability
- Drought reserve
- Monitoring issues: biodiversity, land health, utilization, bare soil, weeds, erosion, soil porosity, litter cover, bare ground
- Setting up and moving portable electric fence
- Manure composting / management
- Soil fertility and nutrient management
- Pasture management
- Managing animals to heal the land (recovery periods, animal days per acre, ecosystem/wildlife needs)
- Water point placement

#### **Production Skills: Crops**

Below is a list of some basic crop management skills that different types of operations offer learners.

##### **Plant cultivation and management - general**

- Plant ID (crops and weeds)
- Weed control strategies
- Plant pathology and pest ID (insects, diseases, etc.)
- Pest management strategies
- Basic soil science
- Basic plant science
- Harvesting
- Post-harvest handling and storage
- Preparing seedbeds and planting
- Irrigation installation and maintenance
- Compost making/processing/using
- Soil fertility management
- Cover cropping
- Crop planning and rotations