Mentee Guide

AgProfit
Strategies

AgProfit Strategies Mentoring Program
—For the Mentee—

Introduction

Farming and ranching require a diverse set of skills, and you need people in your corner—mentors and advisers from a wide range of backgrounds who can help you weather challenges and achieve your agricultural goals. Who do you turn to for support? Farmers who have the experience it takes to answer your questions. They're committed to helping another generation of producers.

Mentorship is the influence, guidance or direction given by a more seasoned farmer to a young producer getting started. In a farm setting, a mentor influences the growth of a mentee.

But really, it is as simple as learning what you need to know about farming from someone eager to explain things to you. They want to help you make your plans work.

In our program, a mentee is chosen from beginning and intermediate producers who attend one of our farmer educational seminars, or view our online learning series. You may be interested in grain, livestock or dairy.

For this progam, there are a couple of field days each year, where the mentee visits the mentor's farm to learn how an experienced producer goes about the daily business of running the farm. Along the way, you can ask questions and learn from the experience of a mentor who's been there and learned the ins and outs of agriculture.

You can interact with your mentor through the two field days a year, and via telephone calls, text or email messages, depending on what works for the mentor.

So, for you, in a nutshell, the program entails first going to the mentor's farm and receiving a tour of the operation. Naturally in conversation, you will probably bring up what you're most intersted in learning by asking questions about the operation. We've included a list of things you may want to know more about. It's up to you to use some of the list, or make up your own topics. It's just a list to get your juices flowing about what you may want to learn more about at this stage of your farming pursuit.

Then, after that first day visiting your mentor's operation, you may want to agree on a way to communicate in the next few weeks as questions come to mind. You can call, email or text depending what works best for the mentor. After that, a few weeks later, you will be able to go back to visit the mentor's operation one more time.

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

In conclusion, just know your mentor wants to share his or hers knowledge and advice with you, to help you become a better farmer. There is a $350 payment to you for participating in the mentoring program.

Mentee 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 want to produce/raise?

How do you market your farm products?

What specific areas do you need help with?

Check each item you are interested in learning more about.
Not every item below will apply to you. The list is meant to offer something for those who did not have the privilege of growing up on a farm or experience ag education, and those who did.

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 ag producers, and the ability to operate and maintain this machinery is pivotal to success.

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
- ☐ Using hand tools
- ☐ Using power tools
- ☐ Driving a 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 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
- [ ] Soil testing and interpretation of results