

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Ranch succession workshop helps multi-generational ranches start the conversation

AT A GLANCE

If you do not decide what your ranch will look like for the next generation, someone else will decide that for you.

The Situation

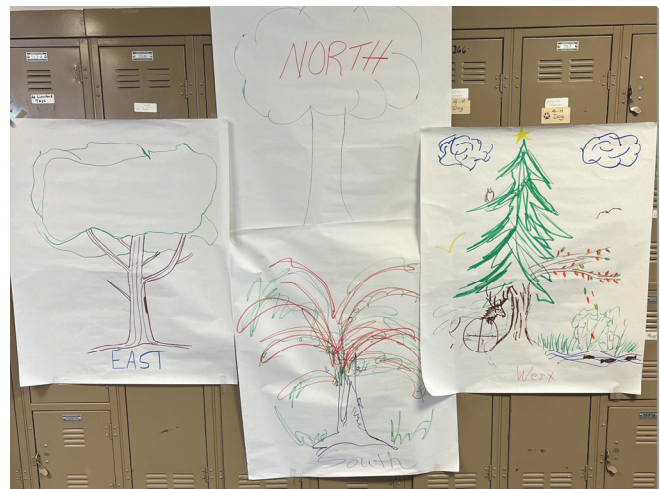
Many of the ranches in Lemhi County have been owned and operated by the same family for multiple generations. This has not happened by accident. The owner/operator planned and passed it down to the next generation. Those same decisions need to be made today.

Decisions include who will own the land, the cattle, the buildings, machinery and who will take over the management. Add in other factors of who has been working on the operation, those who have moved away but feel tied to the land, the increased value of the capital and today's tax laws. It is a complicated but very necessary issue.

Our Response

To assist ranch owners/operators with ranch succession planning, a three-part workshop was offered in April and November of 2024. The goal of the workshop was to have ranches gather the necessary information and paperwork to develop a succession plan. The workshop also provided them with tools and ideas for a family meeting to discuss ranch succession.

We utilized the curriculum developed by North Dakota State University Extension. It came complete with



Participants were placed in personality groups and given the instructions to “draw a tree.”

PowerPoint slides and an exceptionally good participant workbook. The workshop was hosted one night a week for three weeks. Meals were included and the April workshop included childcare. At the April workshop, we had six ranches represented with 25 people. One ranch had three generations attend. The November class involved six ranching operations and 12 people.

The team strongly felt that for a successful family meeting or ranch succession plan, the people involved needed to understand the other people involved. In week one, participants completed a personality quiz and learned about other personality styles and types. We also discussed family values, starting the conversation and family meetings. Week two covered

evaluating their ranch as a business and getting started on the plan. In week three, we focused on making the plan and building our ranch succession team of advisors. Each week, instructors and people from the community shared their succession plan stories.

Program Outcomes

Different survey questions were posted at the beginning of weeks two and three. When asked about some of the challenges faced by the successors coming back, communication was the challenge most mentioned by both classes. The second challenge mentioned was the family members followed by buy-in for new and different ideas. Challenges faced by the owner/operator generation included letting loose of the reins, not having a purpose and deciding who should make management decisions.

In January 2025, participants completed another survey. For the April class, this was eight months after the workshop and for the November class, two months

after. When asked to list three things most valuable to them about the workshop, understanding personalities ranked first and how to start the conversation was second. Of those completing the survey 63% said that they had started the conversation. They had also formed a vision for the ranch and gathered documents and visited with a professional.

The Future

As we move forward with other workshops, we will include time to discuss various business structures and work to compile a list of professionals to help.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

American Farmland Trust and Lemhi Regional Land Trust. USDA Farm Service Agency also provided information about their ranch programs along with Natural Resource Conservation Service.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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