

Vohland says planning is central to livestock and grain operation

BY JOHN FROEHLING

Bob Vohland has a livestock operation in addition to growing corn and beans on his farm near Farmington.

"We have about 30 head of cattle up where I live. That's where my niece is involved. My niece and her husband are involved with the cattle as well as farming," he said.

"It's a cow-calf operation. We have 30 momma cows and sell most of the calves. Others we keep end up in the freezer. We sell it to ourselves."

He said well-known Fulton County farmers Warren "Warny" Wolf and Henry Dare buy calves at places like the Fairview Sale Barn. They raise the calves and sell them at a meat-processing market at the Quad Cities.

The fat cow market at Fairview is also a big market for livestock ready to go to market to be butchered, Vohland said.

"We're calving now," he said. "We try to start the first of March, so we try to avoid nasty, cold weather. Usually, a cow can have

a calf all by herself, but there are issues at times. I've been involved pulling calves."

He said a calf occasionally is not born alive. The cow can get sick and even die when that happens. If the cow can't have the calf, often a veterinarian can get involved, Vohland said.

"Our calving season, we like to have them all on the ground in June – so three months. But it depends on the cow and bull getting together, too," he said.

The gestation period for a cow is nine months, the same amount of time it takes for a woman to have a baby after getting pregnant, he noted. But he added that is not a wise thing to joke about.

He said they sell their calves in an open auction at Fairview.

Expenses skyrocketing

Vohland said he will plant pretty close to half corn and half soybeans this year. Last year, the spread was five-eighths corn and three-eighths soybeans. He's reducing the corn acreage due to the rising cost of fertilizer, which has really shot up.



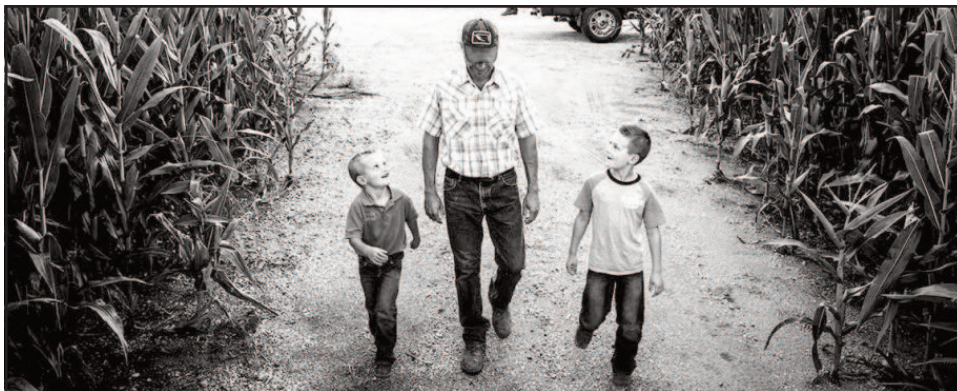
WINTER CHORES FOR Fulton County farmer Bob Vohland include putting seed tender boxes with seeds in them on a planter. He put scales on the tender, which he is shown standing in front of, and was waiting for a piece of equipment to arrive to make it easier to move seed from the tender to the planter.

He said the price of anhydrous ammonia for fertilizer has almost quadrupled – from \$400 a ton in 2021 to nearly \$1,600 a ton now.

Corn generally requires more fertilizer than soybeans, and so it tends to sap more nutrients from the ground. For that reason,

a common practice for many grain farmers is to rotate corn and soybeans each year. Vohland's situation is a little different, however.

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