

Can-Do ATTITUDE

By Kindra Gordon

Where most people might see obstacles and challenges, Monte Bloms is the type of person who sees opportunities. And, his can-do attitude and optimism have helped him build a successful beef operation and custom feedlot – with a new composting venture in the works.

Bloms grew up on a dairy and grain farm in north-central North Dakota – a farm his grandfather homesteaded. After college, he returned to the family operation, and in 2000, he bought his own farm nearby, and continued working with his dad, Bruce Bloms. The pair has farmland, runs a cow/calf herd, and at the time continued dairying.

When they decided to get out of the dairy industry, they simply used the cows they had to make the transition. They put Hereford bulls on their dairy cows, and then eventually used Angus genetics to develop a commercial herd of white-faced cows.

Bloms' next idea was to expand into backgrounding their weaned calves. The farmstead he had purchased included an existing feeding area. But before pursuing it, he had a state health department representative review the property and was told that with the watershed drainage into Lake Darling, the current facility would not be in compliance.

So, rather than give up, Bloms turned to the Mohall Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office to discuss options for relocating the feeding facility to a better site on the farm that would reduce water management and runoff concerns.

He notes, "Conservation is huge; you want to make sure you are doing things the right way." Thus, Bloms knew it was important to take the proper steps to ensure that the facility was designed to protect water quality and meet permit regulations.

He was pleased with the technical assistance provided; and through an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract in 2007, he received cost-share to reconstruct four pens and

a dike system to accommodate 200 head.

Once this animal feeding operation was established, Bloms began to get more and more calls requesting him to do custom feeding. So in 2010, once again working with the Mohall NRCS and an EQIP contract, Bloms moved ahead to expand to a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) for 2,000 head.

Bloms' feeding facility now includes a lined sediment pond and is permitted with the state. He typically backgrounds calves taking them to 700 or 800 pounds before they are resold via North Dakota auction markets or go into finishing feedlots in Nebraska.

Additional conservation practices that he's implemented in his operation include several tree plantings and a rotational grazing system. Another change he's made: Several years ago to avoid spring weather impacts on calving, Bloms transitioned his 300-head cowherd to fall-calving, which begins in August.

Most recently, Bloms is exploring a new opportunity – a compost site for the feedlot manure. He notes that they already use much of the manure on their own farmland, but often have more than they need each spring, which he believes offers future marketing potential. Bloms is exploring the local and regional market direct to individuals, as well as opportunities in the nearby oil fields where compost may be utilized on reclamation sites. He has already consulted NRCS for technical advice in planning this venue, and says they will be helpful in ensuring future efforts are compliant with regulations. He's applying for grant funds to potentially assist with equipment for the composting venture and marketing.

All total, Bloms' "can-do" attitude seems to turn every obstacle into an opportunity, and his beef business success is testament to that.

In offering advice to others, Bloms suggests, "Don't go into anything thinking you know everything. Get information, go on farm or feedlot tours, and take a bit from each and make it your own. That goes for farming, cattle, whatever industry you are in. Get the information you can from where you can and make it your own."



Monte Bloms

- 40-years-old
- Carpio, N.D.
- Owns and operates Bloms Land & Cattle

Education: Attended North Dakota State College of Science at Wahpeton for welding technology

Background: After college, Bloms came home to work with his dad and grandfather, purchasing a neighboring farm of his own a few years later. The Bloms originally had a dairy operation and then transitioned to beef by breeding their dairy cows to Hereford and eventually Angus.

Family: Wife, Nikki, and daughter, Brooklyn, 11; twins, Addison and Brynlee, 8; and son, Rhett, 2.

Industry Involvement: Bloms has been involved with his local Farm Bureau, including serving three years as president. His feedlot has been part of the North Dakota Stockmen's tour, and he is committed to conservation and has worked closely with his local conservation district and NRCS office.

Hobbies: Bloms enjoys attending his kids' sporting events; his winter hobby is shooting pool and traveling to several tournaments.

Advice to others: "Get out and see what others are doing. It may not fit your operation exactly, but make it your own."

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