

## Preparation Involves Accepting Yourself and the Things You Can't Control

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Prepare, prepare and prepare is an often-heard theme during the holiday season. For those of us involved with agrarian societies, the theme is centuries old.

The harvest of last year is barely tucked away and the preparations for the next season begin. Much of what we do actually overlaps from one season to the next, especially in the livestock business. If done right, the holidays should be a time of sharing with those who have less. No matter how hard the last season was on us, we only need to look around and see all the needs. In some cases, our losses may have been considerable, but what remains may still be more than our neighbor had to start with. In either case, tomorrow can be a better day.

Life in general is complicated and at times we find ourselves moving forward faster than we can comprehend were we have been. Agrarian people naturally understand life was never meant to be a constant. We plod along a personal journey encased in an annual cycle of sunrises and sunsets in spring, summer, fall and winter. And for now, following the fall harvest, we prepare and briefly rest on the threshold of winter--a season that will clean up any mistakes.

What I find unique is the difference between those who have had the opportunity to live within an agrarian society and the widening number of those who have not.

Change is constant on a ranch or farm, especially in beef production. The cow calves, lactates, conceives, grows, weans, adds fat and calves again, hopefully every 365 days. Mesmerized to the cycle, we also live the same cycle, adjusting our daily lives to things we cannot change. In cow country, if a cow is calving, the rest of the world will wait. So we prepare, not just physically but mentally for another year of unknowns.

Now is the time for preparation: a gate there, a new board on the fence, hay piled just so, cow cake delivered. We watch the herd with an anxious eye--and we

wait. Those disheartening days occur when we notice cow 34 is in heat when she should be growing a calf inside or we see that cow 69 has noticeably slipped a calf. But the day does not stop over things we cannot control.

This is contrasted with the life of the urban individual, who starts the day expecting, wanting and insisting to be in control. We check the road conditions so we can change them, we check the temperature so we can plug the car in, we expect to get to work or school and we expect coffee and donuts delivered. There are many examples.

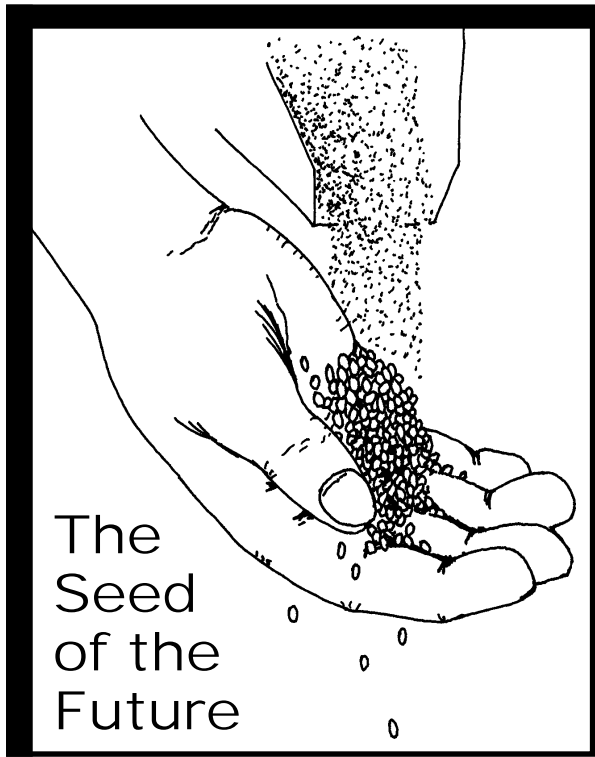
By contrast, the rural country is faced with other challenges: the roads are not cleared until you do it, the tractor won't start until the sun shines on it, you won't get to work until the time is right, you make the coffee and there are no donuts (unless there are some left over in the freezer). There is no one to blame and a grateful neighbor, regardless of personal beliefs, is always welcome.

So as the year comes to an end, hope for next year is entwined in the acceptance of who we are. We are grateful to have had time (as limited as it may be) with our family and friends as we share holiday joy, and some fresh hamburger courtesy of number 34.

Yes, we feed more people today than ever before. We are proud of that, and yet sad. For those of us entrenched in agrarian life, we know, learn and come to understand life in ways seldom reached in the vastness and unceasing demands of a civil, controlled urban life. If only we could market what it really means to hold in your hands the seeds of next years crop, knowing there will always be a next year.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://www.BeefTalk.com). For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.com](http://www.CHAPS2000.com) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0122.

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