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Sale Barn Is Community Hub In This Area

In this part of the country the O'Neill Livestock Market is the hub of the community—a place where the farmers and ranchers go to sell their cattle, pigs or horses, and to buy stock.

That is the main purpose of the sale barn, of course, but it also offers an opportunity for friends to meet, compare notes of interest such as current events, weather and prices. It offers an occasion for the wives to get together for a visit or a chance to get to town for groceries and supplies.

It goes without saying that in this modern day of transportation, farmers and ranchers don't wait until sale day to shop but it is still a big day for business men in O'Neill which can be verified by the number of people in town on Thursdays.

The O'Neill Market, owned and operated under the efficient management of Leigh Reynoldson and his cousin, Vern Reynoldson, employs about 25 persons winter and summer. The Market was built in 1936 by L. D. Putnam and sold to a corporation known as the Civic club which had approximately 46 stockholders. The Club leased it out to Jim Fredrichsen until November 1949 when Vern and Leigh leased it and later bought it.

They hold a sale every Thursday plus about five special ones each year such as the Hereford and the Angus Stock Cattle Sales, the Hereford and the Angus Registered Breeding Stock Sales, and also the 4-H Stocker and Feeder Sale, held just for 4-H sellers.

Vern and Wally O'Connell are the auctioneers and also double with Leigh as ring men. Leigh's brother, Brock Reynoldson, is foreman and Brock's wife is bookkeeper.

If you have never been to the O'Neill Livestock Market you should make a point to visit the place some Thursday. Not only is it a big business, but it offers an opportunity for an interesting education. The Reynoldson men know their business and it's fascinating to watch them in action.

It costs them 90 cents a minute to operate on sale day and it takes good management to keep the stock moving fast enough and

to hold the interest of the customers. Most stock is brought to the Market Wednesday and Thursday. Chute men take over the stock and hand the customers an in ticket. The animals are then penned. Each man's cattle separately. The livestock is driven to sorting pens where the steers are separated from the heifers, etc. in preparation for the ring. After being sold they are driven on the scales, weighed and then yarded off to buyers pens. The buyers at the end of the sale, load their cattle on trucks and receive a load out receipt.

During 1960 the Livestock Market handled approximately 25,000 hogs and 25,000 cattle. Storage space at the Market enables the management to take care of 2,000 cattle and 1,000 hogs at one time.

In 1960 the Reynoldsons paid out a total of \$3,336,622.84 to consignors of livestock. The year 1959 was about the same amount and in 1958, consignors received \$4,329,000. Changes in prices are due to the national livestock market.

Practically all business at the firm is in the handling of stocker and feeder cattle, plus the hog business. The O'Neill Livestock Market is the only firm which handles hogs in this immediate area.

Buyers come from as far as New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Sellers are mostly from this area, and some from surrounding counties and South Dakota. Buyers for meat packing companies are present for the sales.

A licensed veterinarian, Dr. G. R. Cook, is present for each sale, and also the brand inspector, Carrol McKay.

This is a slack time of the year for livestock markets as it is the pasture season. However, the sale barn is still almost filled in O'Neill due to the hog business. In the busy time of the year the Reynoldson men won't get home until midnight, starting the day before to accept stock from consignors. Hogs are auctioned off at 10 a.m. sale day, until 1 p.m. when the cattle sale is held.


The chant of the auctioneer; the sight of the youngsters sitting by their dads like miniatures; a couple of old men dozing; women and men visiting between auctions; time out for a quick trip to the cafe for wonderful homemade pie, coffee and hamburgers; children's eyes lighting up at the sight of little calves and pigs—all these things combined make a day at the O'Neill Livestock Market well worth while.

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