

PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
JANUARY 10, 2025

TESSA PARKS (SHE/THEY)  
W.T. FARMS  
NORTHFIELD, MN

# The Highs, Lows, and Good-to- Knows:

Scaling a Direct-to-Consumer Operation as First-Generation Farmers





# Agenda

01 About Us and the Farm

02 Big Picture Assessment

03 Analyzing each Question

04 Our Assessments in 2024





01

# About Us

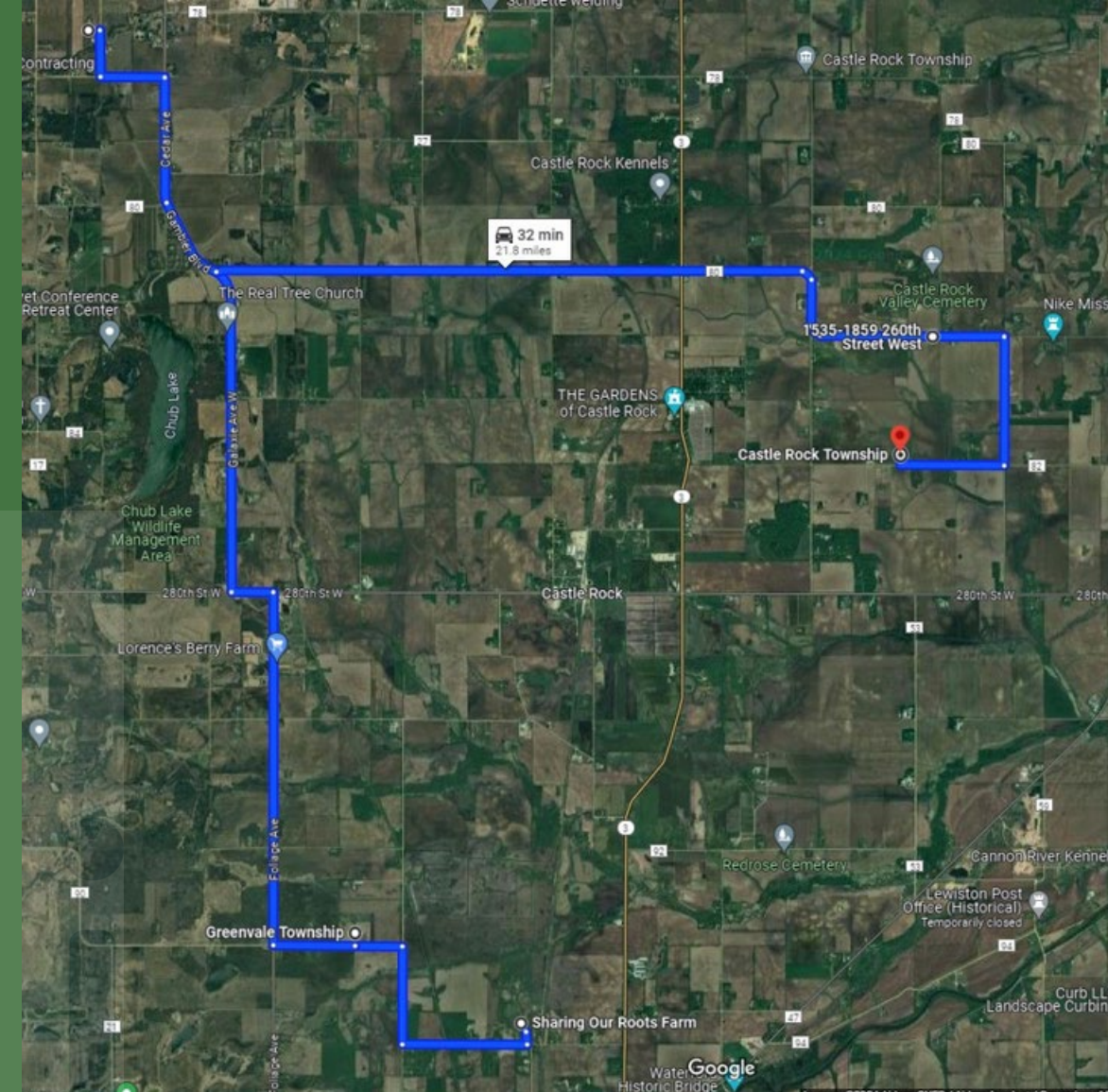
---

The Farmers:  
Wyatt Cropper Parks  
Tessa Sadae Parks





# The “Current” Farm



## 100% Rental Ground

- 5 leases
- ~125 acres total

## Grass-finished Beef

- Purebred Holstein bull calves
- Bottle-fed to butcher
- Weaned at ~10 weeks with starter grain before moving on to pasture and hay
- Target age: 18-22 months

## Hay

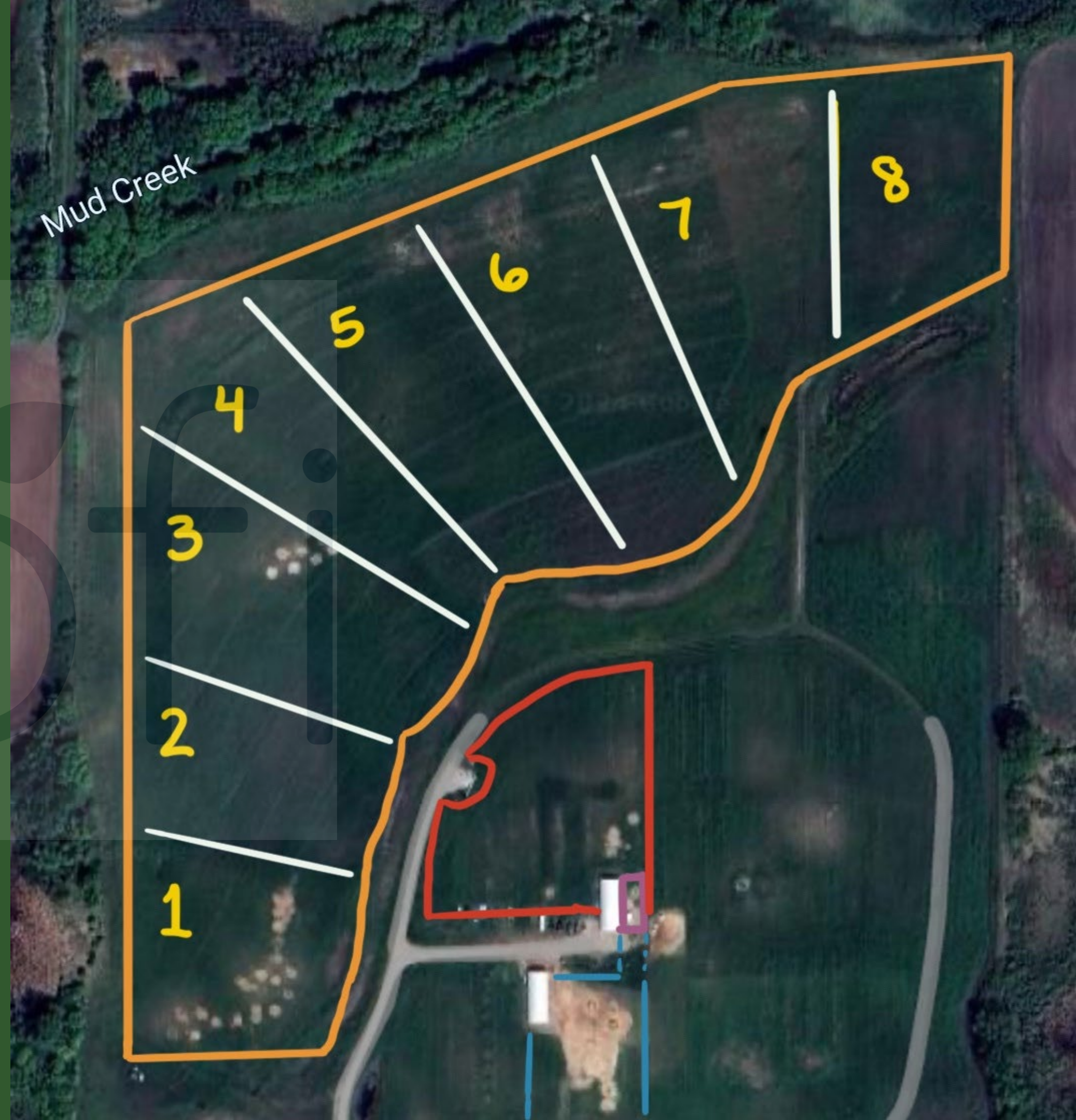
- Over 50 acres certified organic
- ~50 acres transitioning organic
- 4'x5' round bales
- Wrapped for outdoor storage



# Our “homebase”

at Sharing Our Roots

- Water
- Permanent perimeter fencing
- Winter housing (canvas barn)





# Big Picture Assessment

→ DO WE HAVE THE MONEY?

(Probably not - everything is expensive)

→ DO WE HAVE THE SPACE AND TIME?

- Pasture Space
- Freezer Storage

→ DO WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO MOVE IT?

- Transportation

→ DO WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO SELL IT?

- Market opportunities
- Processing access







03

## Do we have the money?

- Profit vs Loss (QuickBooks Report)
- Financier Balance Sheet
- Opportunity cost (can we afford not to do this?)



## Do we have the space and time?

### Pasture

- Rotational grazing
  - 1.5 - 2 acre paddocks
  - ~3-5 days per paddock per group of 5-10
- Permanent and temporary fencing

### Winter Housing/Feed

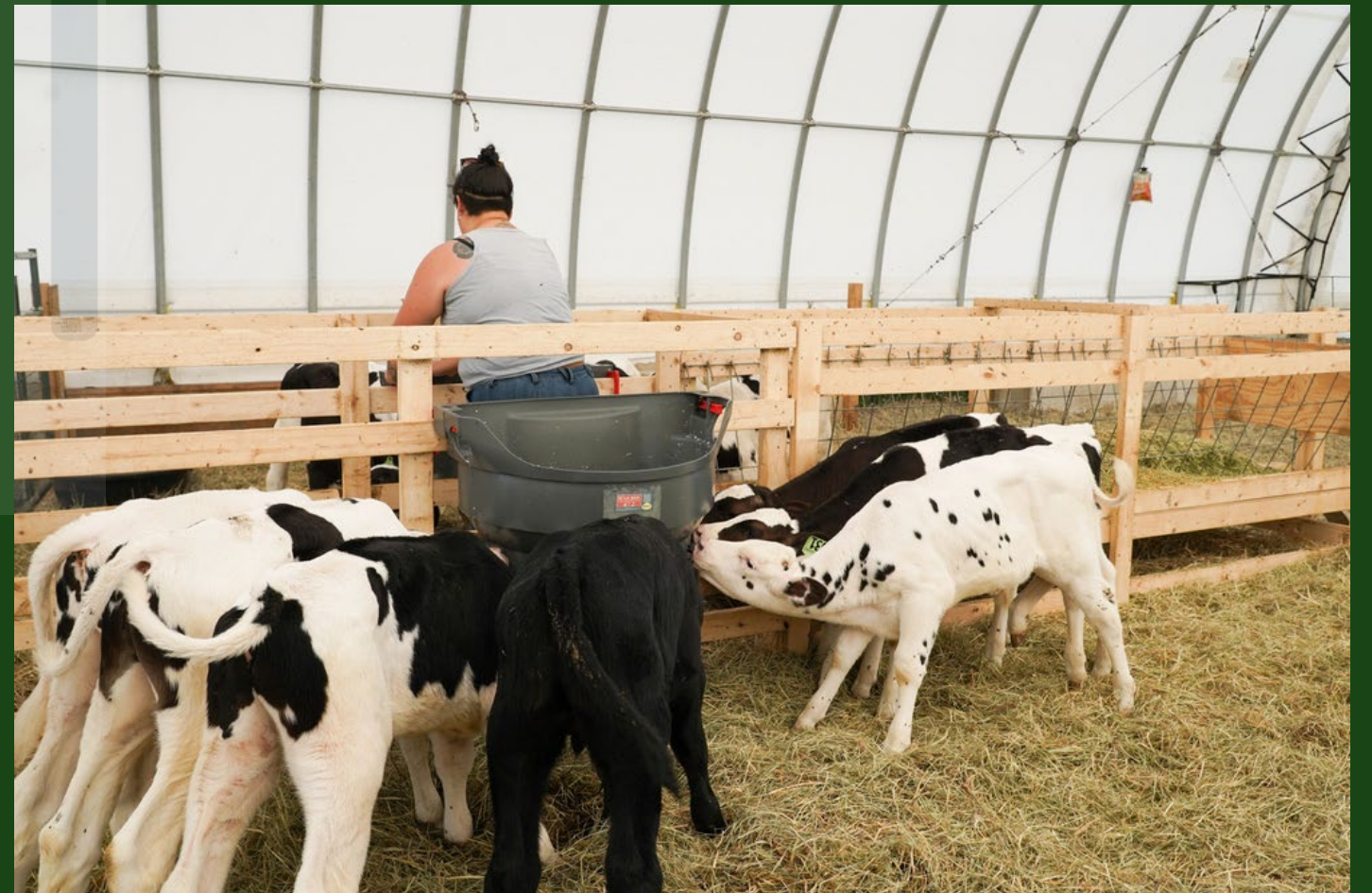
- Barn rental
  - 15 calves/yearlings, or 10 market steers
- Bale Grazing
  - 1 round bale every other day per 10 animals

### Health care

- Basic care (bottle feeding, banding, disbudding)
- Vet Access

### Freezer

- Cold storage unit can hold ~5 steers of beef





03

## Do we have the ability to move it?

### Animals

- Cattle trailer and farm truck
- No handling equipment (chute, squeeze)

### Beef

- Large coolers, chest freezer trailer

### Schedule

- Two full-time off-farm jobs
  - Is it worth our time and labor?





03

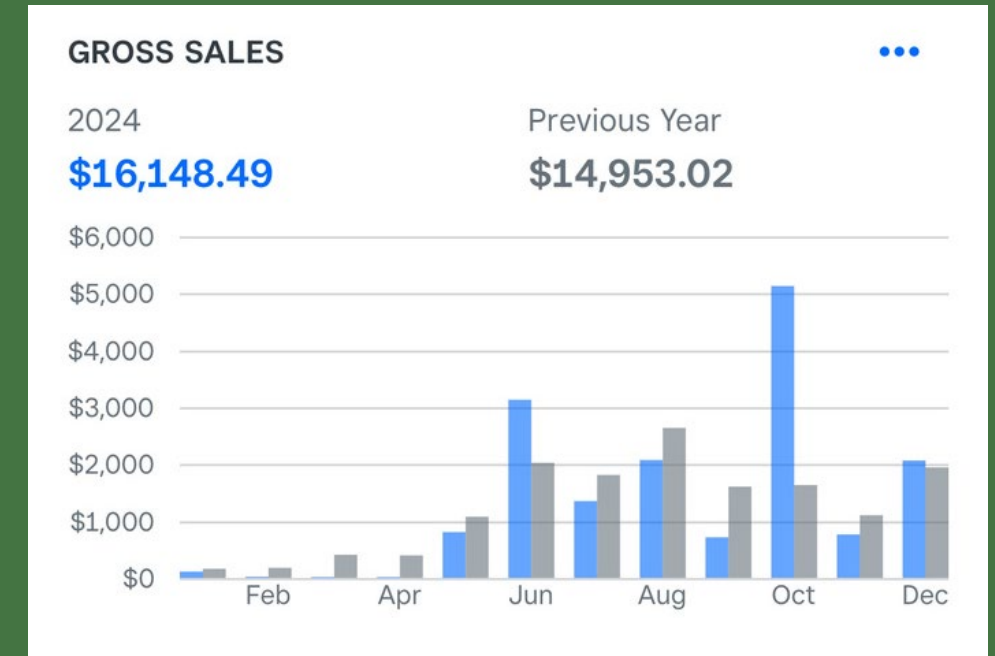
## Do we have the capacity to sell it?

### Markets

- Places to vend
- Potential customer base

### Product Selection

- Proximity to meat processor
  - USDA, custom-exempt, Equal-to
  - Availability
  - Ingredient-added vs product of the farm
- Bulk vs individual cuts vs wholesale





# 2024

## 01 High Calf Prices



- 2023 Average Calf Price: \$150
- 2024 Average Calf Price: \$500+

## 02 On and Off-Farm Work



- Reduced off-farm income
- Wyatt full-time on-farm

## 03 Tractor Purchase



moo hay ground, moo problems

## 04 Flooding / Drought



- Limited Pasture Access
- Changed cashflow (poor hay yields and quality)



## LIFETIME COST VS RETAIL VALUE PER ANIMAL

Retail Value	\$2,949.00
Lifetime Cost per animal	-\$2,218.33
<b>Cost to Weening</b>	<b>-\$793.33</b>
Calf Cost	\$500.00
Days To Ween	60
Total Milk Consumption (gallons)	60
cost for calf starter (50lbs)	\$76.00
Replacement Milk Cost per Gallon	\$3.17
Total Milk Replacer Cost	\$190.00
Daily Creep Feed Consumption (lbs)	1.0
Start Feed 50lbs	\$12.39
Cost to Obtain Calf (Transport/Labor)	\$25.00
Bedding Cost per Bale	\$5.99
Bales per calf	6
Total bedding cost	\$35.94
Bottle Nipples, Mineral Block, Resorb	\$30.00
<b>Cost From Ween To Processing</b>	<b>-\$1,425.00</b>
Months from Ween to Market	18
Total Feed Consumption to Market (Tons)	4.00
Cost per Ton For Feed	\$150.00
Cost to transport to Processing	\$25.00
Lifetime Feed Cost (All Hay)	\$600.00
Processing	\$800.00

## FOR A GROUP OF 5 CALVES SPRING/SUMMER '24

Current Calf Cost (Zumbrota Auction 5/20/24)	\$400.00
<b>Cost for Bottle Calves</b>	<b>\$2,000.00</b>
Milk Replacer Cost	\$76.00 per 50lb bag
Vol. of Milk Replacer per Bag	24 gal
Consumption per Calf	60 gal
Total Group Consumption	300 gal
<b>Total Milk Replacer Cost</b>	<b>\$950.00</b>
Creep/Starter Feed Cost	\$12.39 per 50lb bag
Daily Consumption per Calf	2.0 lb
Total Daily Group Consumption	10.0 lb
Days on Feed	60
<b>Total Starter Feed Cost</b>	<b>\$84.39</b>
Bedding Cost per Bale	\$5.99
Bales per calf	6
Bales per Group of 5	30
<b>Total Group Bedding Cost</b>	<b>\$179.70</b>
<b>Starting Calves Cost</b>	<b>\$3,214.09</b>



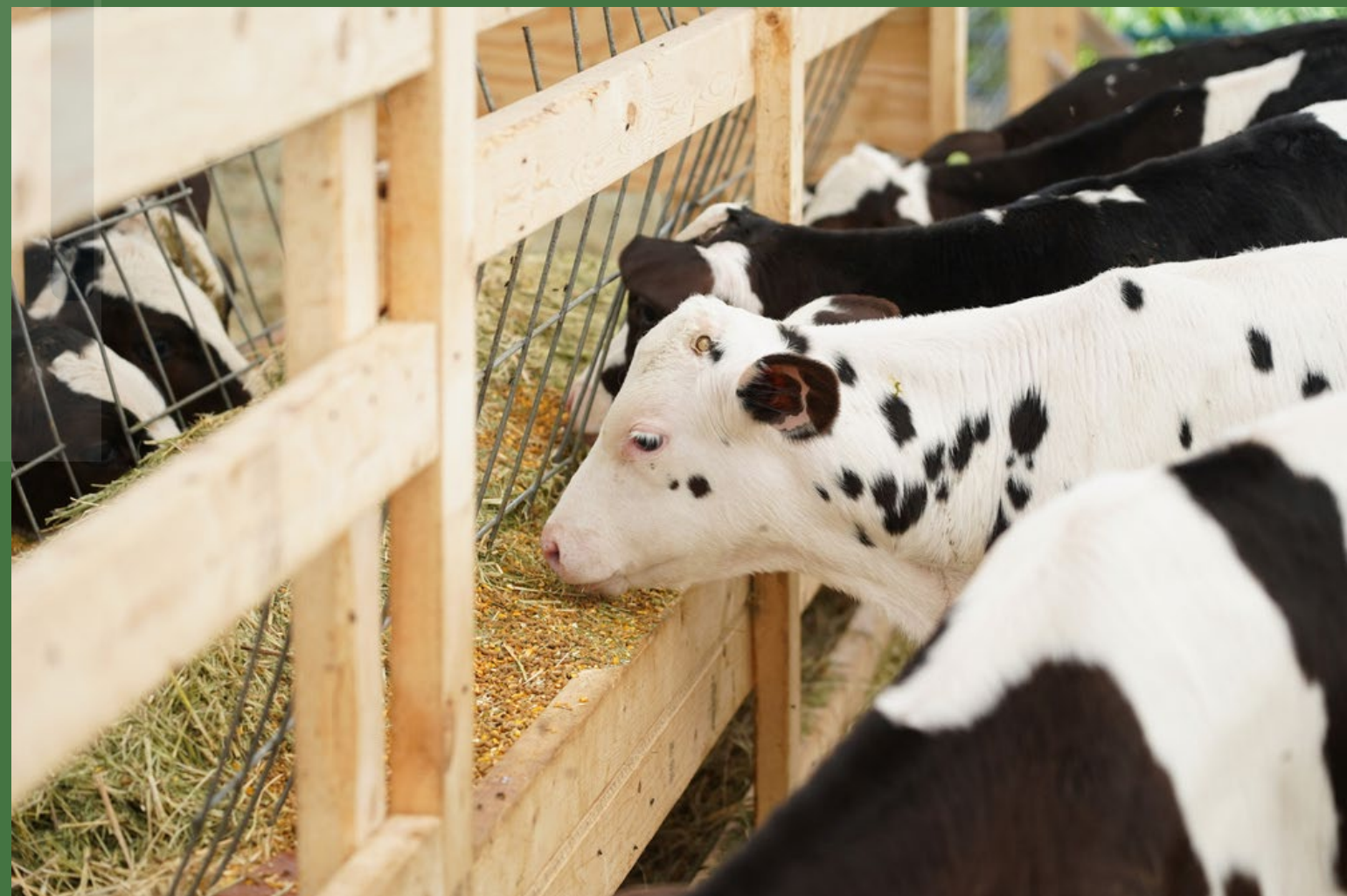


04

## Current Quandary

- Initial 2024 plans:
  - Raise 20 calves
  - Part-time off-farm work for Wyatt
- Actual 2024 plans:
  - No calves
    - No cattle after April 2025 processing (no beef to sell in winter 2025 - 2026)
  - Opportunity to buy feeders from farm friends
    - Poor cashflow (low hay yields and Wyatt full-time on-farm this season)







PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
January 10, 2025

# Thank You



## Contact Us



-  360-303-6804
-  tessa@wtfarmsmn.com
-  www.wtfarmsmn.com
- Cute cow content: @w.t.farmsmn