



# DTN LIVESTOCK®

CASE STUDY

## Link, Land & Cattle

Ionia, Iowa

Sonja and Mike Link own Link Land & Cattle, which includes 300 cows and 1,500 head of feeder cattle. They also farm about 1,200 acres on which they grow corn and soybeans. The corn is used as livestock feed, and they sell their soybeans to the local elevator that is paying the best price. The Links have two full-time employees and one part-time employee.

### The challenge

Weather information and market data are key to both their farming and their cattle operations. They need real time information on both fronts to effectively run their operations and maximize their profits.

### The solution

Mike had already started using DTN/*The Progressive Farmer* via satellite when Sonja joined the business in 2000 after they got married. In March 2006, the Links upgraded to DTN Livestock Professional, which is the industry's only source of comprehensive, livestock-specific market data available directly to producers.

### The results

Both Mike and Sonja use the system for livestock futures, corn futures, soybean futures and for weather. Mike gets on the system every morning to find out which cattle sales are going to be held and what they will be offering.

"I look at it throughout the day for livestock futures quotes and corn and soybean futures quotes," said Sonja. She also tracks cattle pricing from the previous week.

When it comes to weather, "We deal with pretty much everything in Iowa. We have rain, snow, sleet, ice, wind, hot days and cold nights," which makes weather tracking information especially important for the Links. Sonja finds that it is much easier to locate weather information on DTN Livestock Professional than on the more basic system they had before. "With the old system, I had to go into weather, then I had to make two or three extra clicks to go down and find my area. With the new system, I just go into it and I'm right where I need to be." The updated system also shows at the top of the screen if there's new weather information available, like if they've updated the afternoon forecast."

Sonja also tracks market information on DTN/*The Progressive Farmer*. She closely watches the soybean prices to get the best price for their commodity. She also serves as an information resource to her husband when he's off site without access to the system. "Mike, who is a cattle buyer, will call me quite a few times if he's on site at a sale barn that doesn't have a DTN/*The Progressive Farmer* system."



"Obtaining prices for calves and feeder cattle from the system lets Mike know if he's looking at a good price at the sale barn." He also uses the puts and calls information to determine whether to hedge. "We're getting more into that now."

When they want to check corn or soybean prices, DTN Livestock provides the information they need on one page for easy comparison. "My DTN Cash Bids™ figures out which elevator is closest to us, and I think we have about 30 on there."

Sonja and Mike closely track market information on DTN/*The Progressive Farmer*, and their farm manager uses the weather information to plan his work. "Our farm manager will come in and check for weather and wind to decide if he's going to spray and if he'll be able to get done before bad weather hits."

#### The client's view

"What I like about DTN Livestock Professional is the easy access it offers. I can go right to the screen I need without having to pull up websites like I would on the Internet."

Sonja Link, office manager, Link Land & Cattle