



# Operating loans financial lifeblood for ranchers, farmers

By DIANNA TROYER  
For the Capital Press

**“We’re on a first-name basis with most people who walk through our doors. Our customers are like friends and repay their loans, so we don’t have the losses a larger city bank might have.”**

Kent Gunnell, commercial ag loan officer at D.L. Evans Bank

For most southeastern Idaho ranchers such as Doug Ward, an annual operating loan is the financial lifeblood of their business.

“We couldn’t operate without it,” says Ward, 59, who runs 300 cows and raises hay on about 300 acres near Almo just north of the remote Idaho-Utah border.

A third generation rancher, Ward applies for the annual infusion of cash at one of Idaho’s oldest banks. Established in 1904 in the small town of Albion about 30 miles from Ward’s ranch, D.L. Evans Bank is the same bank his dad and grandad used.

Ward relies on Kent Gunnell, commercial ag loan officer and assistant manager, not only for the loan, but also for information about new lending practices and financial assistance in case of emergencies.

“You can’t budget for unpredictable events,” says Ward. “Sometimes a tractor needs major repair or replacement or other things happen, so it’s good to know I can extend out my payments. Kent’s really on the ball and gets paperwork processed on time.”

Ward says he appreciates a banker who takes the time to know his clients.

“I can sit down and tell him what my needs are, and we go from there,” says Ward.

To help clients, Gunnell has sometimes advised them to rewrite their business plan, estimating their income conservatively.

“If unforeseen things happen, it gives you a buffer,” Gunnell says. “We sometimes advise borrowers to write a personal budget, too, to help them make decisions about their money.”



Doug Ward and grandson Jack “Hard Tack” Francis driving a tractor. Ward, a rancher near Almo, Idaho, relies on D.L. Evans Bank for an annual operating loan.



Kent Gunnell, commercial ag loan officer at D.L. Evans Bank in Albion, analyzes farmers’ business plans.

**BELOW:** A view of Doug Ward’s ranch near Almo, Idaho. Ward relies on D.L. Evans Bank for an annual operating loan.

Gunnell says generations of families, such as the Wards, have supported the bank for more than a century and helped build it into what it is today.

“We’re on a first-name basis with most people who walk through our doors,” Gunnell says. “Our customers are like friends and repay their loans, so we don’t have the losses a larger city bank might have. They know that if a problem arises or if they want to discuss financial objectives, they can

talk to someone face-to-face instead of a person at an 800 number.”

The bank was Cassia County’s first financial institution. When state Sen. D.L. Evans established it for farmers and ranchers in remote areas, he said, “Banking is really just about one thing: helping people.” The bank was capitalized with \$25,000.

Today, the third-generation, family-owned community bank has more than \$1.2 bil-

lion in assets with 28 full-service branches and seven mortgage lending offices across Southern Idaho.

The bank’s headquarters eventually moved from Albion, a town of 270, to Burley, a town of 10,500 about 18 miles to the northwest.

At the Albion branch, Gunnell says a small town atmosphere still prevails.

“We’ve stayed true to our founder’s goals about helping people.”



# Farmers rely on accountants in making tough decisions

By DIANNA TROYER  
For the Capital Press

Would a robotic milking system be a sound investment for Midway Dairy?

Dairy manager Dave Gerratt asked the question recently during the weekly board meeting of Ida-Gold Farms’ general partners in southeastern Idaho.

The third-generation family business includes a 4,000-cow dairy north of Malta and a sprawling 8,000-acre farm that produces potatoes, alfalfa, grain and corn. Gerratt’s cousin, Todd Gerratt, oversees crop production.

To answer the question, they turned to their certified



Dianna Troyer/For the Capital Press  
Dave Gerratt, manager of Midway Dairy north of Malta, Idaho, monitors valves as milk is sent to a holding tank.

showed we couldn’t cover our existing debt while adding more debt with a new robotic system,” Gerratt says. “It would have worked if we were building a new facility or were debt-free.”

For the Gerratts, their accountants are indispensable.

“We need to know the unit cost of production, whether it’s 100 pounds of milk, a bushel of wheat, or a 100-pound sack of potatoes,” Gerratt says. “When agreeing to contracts, we make our decisions based on that information.”

The Gerratts have relied on the Rupert accounting firm

public accountants at Condie Stoker and Associates in nearby Rupert.

“A financial analysis

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# Financial planner, CFO offer unique expertise

By DIANNA TROYER  
For the Capital Press

Realizing he would one day switch his role from chief executive officer of Moss Farms to retiree, Dan Moss sought advice from a financial planner 20 years ago.

The Idaho farmer not only needed an investment portfolio to provide retirement income for himself, but he wanted to offer an employer-matching 401k plan to his workers.

The farm’s 50 full-time summer workers grow potatoes, sugar beets, wheat and corn on 14,000 acres. The business’ potato packing plant in Rupert has 40 full-time year-round workers. Some 80 workers are hired during harvest.

“I wanted to offer some financial help to our employees for their retirement,” says Moss, 64.



Courtesy of Bill Schaefer

Dan Moss, CEO of Moss Farms, grows corn, wheat, potatoes and sugar beets in southeastern Idaho.

He turned to a financial planner, Dee Darrington, an investment representative at D.L. Evans Bank in Burley.

“Dan was really progressive for offering a matching 401K plan to his employees, from managers to pipe movers,” says Darrington. “I think more farmers will start doing that in the future.”

He emphasizes that a retirement portfolio needs diversification.

“Safety through diversification is the key,” says Darrington, who helps clients pick from a combination of stocks, bonds, mutual funds and

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