Cattle broker Nicole Wines one of few women in the business

by AMY FOX
News-Argus Staff Writer

Montana’s livestock brokering business is often thought of as a man’s world. Not for Nicole Wines, though. Wines has owned a successful livestock marketing and brokering company, Nicole Wines Livestock LLC, since 2010. To top it off, she has a pickup and a 24-foot stock trailer to transport livestock as a convenience to her customers.

A native of North Dakota, Wines grew up on a farm and ranch and worked in a veterinary clinic through high school. She graduated from North Dakota State University with a Bachelors Degree in veterinary technology. She moved to Montana in 1991 and now lives in the Livingston area. Shortly after coming to Montana, she took an interest in cattle marketing and broke into the business.

“I have been in the cattle marketing business using the Internet as a tool since the late 1990s,” said Wines. “When I heard about marketing cattle this way, I didn’t even own a computer. I decided to go into the business, bought a computer and contacted one of the first Internet cattle companies, which I worked with for about 10 years before starting my own company in 2010.”

According to Wines, the Internet has been a large factor in her success. This is largely because sellers can capitalize when the markets are in their favor, trading 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Buyers have the same advantage on their end, buying when prices are low at any hour of the day. Wines estimated that only about 10 percent of her customers owned a computer when she started. Now, she thinks that about 95 percent own a computer. Yet, as successful as the Internet has been in the growth of her business, Wines spends more time visiting her customers at their homes.

“I go to the ranchers’ places and look at the cattle they are selling,” said Wines. “I ask about their operation, genetics, ranch management, and calculate any added value programs for them to gain premiums.”

After each visit, Wines discusses the price range for what ranchers have for sale and list the sale on the Internet. Wines said that, using the ask/bid format, she can move livestock in as fast as one day, depending on markets. Wines also transports the livestock from the sellers to buyers.

Wines travels all over for her job and is no stranger to the Lewistown area ranchers. Wines said she is in the Lewistown area for months at a time in the spring and fall. For the rest of the year, she travels to Lewistown several times a month.

“I love everything about my job,” said Wines. “I think any rancher would attest to this. One thing about dealing with people in agriculture is that there are not many people you wouldn’t want to be around. I get to see so much country and be around the most down-to-earth respectable people.”