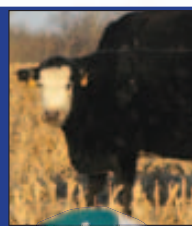




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# Satisfied buyers

By ANN TONER

**A**NDY Stock of Murdock knows there is more to the hay business than forage itself. It's his honesty and regard for the needs of his customers that keeps them coming back for more.

"I try to be honest, to represent the product for what it is. It only takes a few bad bales or a bad load to ruin your reputation," he says.

"You treat people as you want to be treated," says Stock, who is a member of the Nebraska Alfalfa Marketing Association. The Golden Rule guides customer relations for Stock and his wife, Cassy, who took over the hay and farming operation following the deaths of his parents.

"Dad was always known for delivering what was promised, like we described it," Andy Stock says.

Most of the Stocks' hay business involves alfalfa, and 90% of sales are to a handful of regular customers in Indiana, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas.

Stock prints up contact log books in which he jots down pertinent information about every hay-related phone call he gets. For regular customers, he keeps a file on their hay needs, how the hay is fed, details of their operations and the names of their wives, children, interests and hobbies, among other facts.

To be first in the minds of his customers when they need hay, Stock has an eye-catching yellow and green Stock Hay Co. logo and a catchy slogan: "We put the pro in protein."

He sends his customers handwritten thank-you notes from time to time, plus gifts at Christmas: Sweatshirts with the company logo, Nebraska gift baskets, specialty beef and gift certificates for a night out in a chain eatery such as Applebee's. This year he hopes to send out calendars with pictures from his own farm haying operation.

- At a glance**
- Andy Stock tries to represent his hay honestly to buyers.
  - He keeps logbook of calls and jots down useful information.
  - He sends thank-you notes and Christmas gifts.



■ For more about the Stocks' hay operation, see Page 5.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE:** Andy Stock's recipe for market success is to "treat people as you want to be treated."

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