Guidelines for organizing meetings

It can be helpful to keep a few simple guidelines in mind as you organize your farm or ranch family meetings:

1. **Participation** – Everyone involved in the operation should be included or given a chance to participate; involvement fosters ownership in the operation.

2. **Environment** – Establish an open, trusting environment where everyone feels respected and everyone feels comfortable expressing their views.

3. **Leadership** – Consider rotating the facilitation of meetings...it fosters equality, democracy and a sense of shared leadership in the operation.

4. **Agendas** – Create an agenda for each meeting; make sure everyone’s agenda items are included; stick to the agenda so meetings don’t drag on and on.

5. **Listening** – Follow the rule that only one person speaks at a time; practice the art of...
active listening (say what you heard the other person say before speaking yourself).

6. Disagreements – If there are disagreements, listen to all perspectives then find a solution that works for everyone; seek outside help if a disagreement turns into conflict.

7. Recognition – Celebrate successes and make sure family members are recognized for their contributions; compliments can prevent disagreements and conflicts.

8. Information – Make sure all information—good and bad—is shared; foster an attitude of sharing information, ideas and plans for the future!
Farm or ranch family meetings can be one of the best ways of fostering communication and resilience in multi-family farming operations. Try these ideas—they work!

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