

SUCCESS STORY: LAZY HORSE VINEYARD

Couple Turns Cattle Farm to Vineyard and Brewery



There is nothing lazy about Jim and Julie Stutzman, a hard-working couple who have dedicated the past six years to developing the Lazy Horse Brewing & Winery in Ohioa, Neb.

The Stutzmans, once owners of a custom cattle grazing operation just south of Ohioa, a village of about 120 people in Fillmore County, got the idea to plant a vineyard when they heard of a seminar on vineyard management in neighboring Dorchester.

“That put the idea in our heads, and Julie decided she wanted to try growing a vineyard in our backyard,” Jim Stutzman recalls. “We contacted the University of Nebraska and sent them some soil samples. They suggested we try 10 or 15 vines. Instead, we planted 300 the first year.”

REPORT DATE

› March 2019

INDUSTRY

› Winery and Brewery

CONSULTING

› Financial review
› Business planning

RESULTS

› Loan obtained for vineyard

The couple also contacted the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) office at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where Odee Ingersoll, center director, prepared an initial review of financial information and loan package/business planning resources.

The Stutzmans assembled initial start-up cost estimates and cash flow forecasts, and Ingersoll offered recommendations. Using these resources, the Stutzmans were able to develop the information they needed to successfully obtain a loan.

Two years after the initial planting, the Stutzmans had increased the number of vines to 2,100. Herbicide drift, however, hit the plants hard and reduced the vineyard by 60 percent.

That led the couple to focus more on the brewery side of the business. They have since increased beer production per batch from a 2-1/2 barrel, 70 gallon system to a 10 barrel, 310 gallon system

The Stutzmans now offer more than a half-dozen varieties of wines and have produced 55 different beers, including several award winning brews. Lazy Horse has also expanded to a total of 14 employees.

Stutzman says Ingersoll kept the couple “headed in the right direction. It’s nice to have someone who knows what they’re doing look at your numbers and give you an honest opinion. When you look at them yourself, you’re never really sure.”

He says the NBDC’s services are worthy of a toast. “I can’t imagine a better resource out there,” he says, “for any industry and any business, especially one just starting out.”

CONSULTANT: ODEE INGERSOLL | FILLMORE COUNTY | STATE SENATE DISTRICT 32 | CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3