

# SUCCESS STORY

## RL VALLEY RANCH

Agriculture is integral to Ohio history and continues to be the No. 1 contributor to our state economy. An important part about Ohio's agriculture community is that the majority of farms are family-owned, just like RL Valley Ranch.

The Phillips family has worked the land in Guysville, Ohio, for more than 100 years, but they wanted to make the farm more sustainable going forward. By 2008, Rob Phillips and his wife, Leah, knew it was time to move the farm away from solely agriculture crops and into beef cattle production. As a result, RL Valley Ranch was officially established.

Over the years, Rob worked to build a high-quality cattle production. He contracted a processor and has butchering specifications provided to clients. Rob made a point to incorporate a high level of customer service to the sales process by personally delivering products, as well as having routine conversations with customers to find out exactly what they need and fix any issues they might have. This allowed Rob to develop great relations with his clients.

RL Valley Ranch beef is now sought after because of their top-quality, naturally raised beef. The expansion allowed the company to not only offer locally, but to deliver to the urban Columbus market as well.



Everyone from local Athens grocers to bigger restaurants feature RL Valley beef.

In 2017, Rob attended a QuickBooks course at his local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Ohio University. After the class, Rob talked with advisor Carleen Dotson about his business and the assistance the SBDC could offer RL Valley Ranch. From that point on, Carleen and Rob worked together on financial analyses, industry research, projections, and growth.

As with most small businesses, Rob found his ranch in some struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic, but not for lack of business. The pandemic caused major beef shortages within the industry, and RL Valley had to start providing bulk purchases of their beef.

Rob knew Carleen would be a great resource to his company during times when his business plans had been flipped upside down.



She is always there when I need her," Rob said. "She is a voice of reason that I need sometimes. We can talk through issues that I am having with the business and come up with solutions. She does not always tell me what I want to hear, and I need that.



They were in frequent contact regarding sales and how to manage the increased demand. Although RL Valley lost several restaurant clients, the grocery and shipping demand skyrocketed. It was critical that Rob not deplete his herd just to keep up with demand and instead work toward finding a long-term solution.

The day the U.S. Small Business Administration opened the pandemic Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program for agricultural businesses, Rob and Carleen met to complete his application. Within a week, Rob was approved and received the entire amount of his loan. The EIDL funds were crucial in enabling him to replenish his herd during the time of high demand

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Since I have been working with Rob, one of the biggest challenges has been with obtaining financing," Carleen said. "Many banks are stepping away from traditional agriculture loans. Luckily, with the increased sales, the farm is more sustainable than ever.

Rob said he has come to rely on his SBDC advisor anytime he makes a major purchase or wants to try something different. He said his positive relationship with his advisor opened major doors for his company.

The farm now has multi-year projections in place, up-to-date QuickBooks with customized reports, and a clear plan for the future.

For more information on RL Valley Ranch, visit [rlvalleyranch.com](http://rlvalleyranch.com).



To learn more about the Ohio Small Business Development Centers, visit [clients.ohiosbdc.ohio.gov](http://clients.ohiosbdc.ohio.gov).

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