



Ethan Zobel of EZ Equipment Sales talks business and agriculture

by BRENT HARM
IDA COUNTY COURIER

Ethan Zobel started EZ Equipment Sales in 2013 when he was just 13 years old.

“It started as just buying, repairing, and reselling farm equipment,” explained Zobel. “It quickly evolved into the parts business it is today, where our main focus is selling new, used, and rebuilt tractor and combine parts.”

EZ Equipment is located half a mile east of Holstein on Highway 20 (5488 Hwy 20). Zobel currently employs two full-time employees and nearly a dozen part-time employees plus himself.

Zobel discussed the volume of business he does.

“We currently have somewhere around 250 tractors and combines on the lot, and that number is pretty stagnant as we tear machines down just about as fast as they come in. This year we have averaged 3 or 4 machines a week coming in. I have been very aggressive and ambitious in growing this business. We take apart the machines piece by piece, and inventory anything we believe can be sold.”

Zobel talked about the role technology plays in his work.

“Our inventory system and sales tracking software is probably the most complex technology we implement on a daily basis. It gives us the ability to track inventory and sales trends, to keep the business as efficient as possible. This information also helps my salvage buyers with crucial insight about what machines cash-flow the best.”

Zobel mentioned some areas where his business stands out from other businesses.

“I believe the main attributes that set us apart from any other similar businesses is that we are always listening to customers’ needs, whether it is in person hav-



Photo submitted

Red power: Ethan Zobel stands next to a couple of the tractors at his business, EZ Equipment, located just east of Holstein.

ing a conversation, or indirectly via the information on our inventory and sales tracker. I have always taken this information into consideration deeply when making business decisions.”

Zobel also talked about some issues facing farmers today.

“The ag market has always been fairly unreliable,

and I’ve found that farmers are very resilient in that they always find a way to make things work, but a couple things that are concerning on the ag side that pertain to my business are parts availability and farmers’ ability to repair their own equipment. We all know that COVID-19 caused huge supply chain issues, but we are several

years past those initial issues and yet I hear that excuse on nearly a daily basis. I call it an excuse because I believe a lot of companies are just using it as an easy crutch to lean back on when any issues arise.

“I also see that it is more and more difficult for farmers to repair their newer

equipment in-house, which can lead to enormous repair bills at dealers charging \$140-\$200 per hour. In good times, it’s much easier to pencil those expenses in, but, in hard times, a \$50,000 transmission rebuild or a \$100,000 engine rebuild could just about break a guy. I don’t foresee new parts

prices or widespread new parts availability improving in the near future, which will keep our business busy selling used and rebuilt parts. But, I sympathize with farmers who may have to wait weeks or months for parts to repair a vital piece of equipment, when used or rebuilt may not be an option.”

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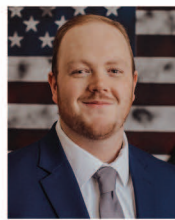
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#1 Pig farmers in Iowa produce **OVER 37 billion servings of pork** each year.

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