

[• Return to Story](#)

Keeping an eye on it

Wireless camera gives farmer an extra set of eyes

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By simply changing the channel on his TV, Jim Prchal goes from watching his favorite show to monitoring his cattle in the barn. If there is a problem or if a cow is calving, he can see it all with his AgCam (www.agcam.com). A wireless camera not only helps Prchal with calving, but it also assists him with tasks throughout his farm.

Prchal of Lidgerwood, North Dakota, says he mainly installed the camera for calving, but he's found many uses for it beyond that.

"I put it on my fertilizer sprayer in spring and watch it to see when the tank is empty," Prchal explains. "I also use it on my baler when I'm making hay."

Prchal finds himself checking his livestock on the monitor more often than he did before he had the camera. That's because the cows tended to be more nervous when they saw him in the barn.

Charissa Rubey, AgCam's marketing director, says she is surprised at how quickly the system has caught on. The wireless system has also captured the attention of farmers who sometimes find wires getting in the way. With different antennas, the monitor can be placed anywhere from 2,500 feet to 6 miles away from the camera.

"I found the wireless to work well because I don't have a wire running from the barn to my house," Prchal explains. His house is about 300 feet from the barn.

Rubey says farmers use the wireless cameras on combines during harvesting, on hoppers when unloading, and even for recreational purposes like ice fishing. "Another good place to put the camera is on a grain dryer," she says. "This is so you can watch the gauge monitor in the house and make sure the dryer doesn't get too hot."

The camera has been beneficial to Prchal. "I'd say I've gotten my money back already," he says.