

# Global Case Writing Competition 2011

## Corporate Sustainability Track

### **Finalist**

### **Y U Ranch: Strategy and Sustainability in Cattle Ranching**

Pamela Laughland, Brent McKnight and Tima Bansal  
(Richard Ivey School of Business, Canada)

This is an Online Inspection Copy. Protected under Copyright Law.  
Reproduction Forbidden unless Authorized. Questions relating to permission should be  
directed to: [cases@ivey.ca](mailto:cases@ivey.ca).

Copyright © 2011 by the Authors. All rights reserved. This case was prepared by Pamela Laughland, Brent McKnight and Tima Bansal as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate the effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, used in a spreadsheet, or transmitted in any form by any means without permission.

**oikos sustainability case collection**

<http://www.oikos-international.org/projects/cwc>

## Abstract

Bryan Gilvesy owns and operates Y U Ranch, a Longhorn cattle ranch in southern Ontario. In this case series, Gilvesy is required to make a set of interesting but seemingly unimportant decisions. Collectively, over the three cases, students will see that each decision builds on the previous decision (i.e., the decisions are path dependent), which contributes not only to Gilvesy becoming less “sustainable” in the traditional sense of the word (i.e. contributes to his ranch taking on a larger environmental footprint, becoming a smaller social concern and generating lower financial returns) but also less “resilient” (i.e. contributes to his ranch becoming more exposed to the vagaries of market conditions).

In case A, Gilvesy must decide whether to feed his cattle a growth hormone called Ralgro, which will increase the size of each animal and thereby improve his revenue. In case B, Gilvesy evaluates the use of ionophore and corn, which the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Program rightly claims will lead to a more consistent quality of beef. Taken together, these two cases illustrate why industrial farming has supplanted the farm-based agricultural system. In case C, Loblaws, the major retailer of corn-fed beef, stops sourcing its beef from the Ontario Corn Fed Beef Program, leaving Gilvesy without a market. After reviewing the case series, the instructor can engage students in a discussion about the importance of systems in influencing organizational resilience.