Damage to Gothenburg Livestock estimated at $250,000.

Kathy Brott had been sprucing up the pavilion area of Gothenburg Livestock.

She owns the business and an auction service with husband, Wendell Brott.

The weekend before fire destroyed Gothenburg Livestock on Feb. 25, Kathy painted some bleachers surrounding the sale ring and hooked up fans to dry the paint.

“We were having a cattle sale on Wednesday,” she said.

A propane heater, in a furnace room, helped keep the spacious room warm while she worked.

On the day of the fire, she cleaned the area and left for North Platte about 3 p.m.

About an hour and half later, at around 4:30 p.m., smoke and flames engulfed and destroyed the 77-year-old building.

Initially, Gothenburg fire chief Mark Ballmer blamed the blaze on a malfunction in the heater.

However a State Fire Marshal investigator said results were inconclusive, adding that the cause

of the fire is undetermined.

Fire investigators have coordinated with the insurance company for more analysis, a State Fire Marshal spokesperson said.

Wendell, and the Brott's 18-year-old son, Cooper, were at the sale barn the day of the fire and left, for about 45 minutes, to check on cows and calves in the south hills.

While they were gone, an Eastside Animal Center employee next door spotted smoke coming from the sale barn.

On the Brotts drive back to town, Wendell received a call from a friend who said the sale barn was on fire.

"I didn't believe him," Wendell said.

But a black cloud of smoke funneling into a blue sky confirmed what the caller had said.

As evening fell, the building and business the Brotts have owned for the past 22 years smoldered on the ground.

Wendell said on Monday that the family doesn't know yet whether or not they will rebuild.

“We certainly have no intention of leaving,” he said. “We’ve got farm ground, cattle and a feed lot.”

Customers are taking their livestock to sell at other sale barns which have offered to help, he said.

The Brotts still operate their auction service with a farm sale set for this Saturday.

Fortunately, the building and its contents were covered by insurance.

Ballmer estimated damage to the building at $250,000.

Despite the tragedy, the Brotts said they’ve been offered tremendous support from the community.

Last Saturday, workers with heavy equipment started removing the charred remains of the building with heavy equipment.

Wendell said he looks forward to getting the property cleaned up and “out of here.”

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