

Five Oaks Beef

Five Oaks Family Farm Monthly Newsletter

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On The Farm...

This week on the farm has been very busy and next week is shaping up to be even more so.

On Monday, we will be hosting a farm visit for our friends from The Hen & The Hog restaurant. The Hen & The Hog is a great little restaurant in downtown Halifax, about 40 minutes from Warrenton, that specializes in fantastic farm to table offerings. Most of the food is locally sourced and delicious and the service is great!

If you have not tried them, I would really recommend that you do. They are one of our favorite restaurants and if you're there for lunch, you should try the Five Oaks Dip. The Five Oaks Dip is Executive Chef Rae Parker's rendition of the classic French Dip sandwich, but prepared with great Five Oaks Beef!



On Monday the 17th of July, we will be 'working' the entire herd at the Newell Farm. Working the herd, at this time of year, means that we will be vaccinating and de-worming the whole herd, both mommas and calves, and castrating bull calves that are not going to be reserved for breeding. We also have 4 cows that need to be 'pregnancy checked'.

We vaccinate with Covexin 8 and Triangle 10 which are given as sub-cutaneous (just beneath the skin) injections. These vaccines are 'combination vaccine's and together, protect from a total of 18 different potential problems that can afflict beef cattle in North Carolina.

We will be doing the vaccination and de-worming ourselves but will have our Vet on hand for the castrations and the pregnancy checks.

On Tuesday, we will be moving the herd at the Newell Farm from the east pasture, across the center pasture, to the west pasture. This will position them to sort more easily in preparation for working them on the following Monday.

As many of you know, we rent the Newell Farm just outside of town and we are very fortunate to have Kathy Newell as our farm manager and also as our on-site landlord. Kathy has a lot of experience with cattle and has been a great resource for us!

Five Oaks Beef Availability...

I am pleased to announce that our 'cows have turned green'. Most of you, the ones that follow our website and read this newsletter, at least, know what that means and are quite excited. The excitement is evident in all the orders coming in! Thanks! If you need beef, you should order soon as we anticipate the cows turning yellow in the next day or two and then red by the end of the week.

For those of you who are new to the group, our cows turning green is not a serious medical condition that you should be concerned about! You can check out our website at <http://www.fiveoaksbeef.com/pricing--buy-now.html> for more detail, but basically, each of our delicious beef packages has a small cow symbol associated with it. If the package has a green cow, the package can be ordered and delivered within a week or so. If the cow symbol is yellow, we have most of the necessary cuts in stock to create and deliver the package but we may offer you a few substitutions. Red cows, however, mean that too much substitution would be required and the package is temporarily sold out until more beef is available.

Why Cattle Should Never Become Pets...

We are often asked if we 'name' our cattle. Some visitors to the farm ask if they can 'pet the cows'. Others ask if it is difficult sending a steer or heifer off for harvesting after having them with us and taking care of

them for so long. The answers are No, No and a resounding YES, in that order!

A dog or cat, if they are fortunate enough to be born or adopted into a good family can expect to live a long,



full life and barring accidents, succumb to a natural death or painlessly euthanized if they should become afflicted with a terminal disease or condition.

Cattle, on the other hand are born into this world with a quite different fate. As food animals, they are all destined, at some point, either younger or older, to be harvested for food. Caring for cattle and tending to their needs while maintaining emotional distance, as difficult as this can be at times, is essential for a number of reasons.

First, without some emotional detachment, it would be impossible to send them for processing.

Second, if you treat them as pets, they come to see you as just another member, albeit a senior and ugly member ☺, of the herd. You could easily find yourself in a situation where you were standing in a corral or pasture, surrounded by 50 or 60, 1100 to 1200 pound animals who can be quite unruly and like to play rough! Clearly a situation to be avoided!

So what do we do? Understanding their destiny, we care for them. We treat them respect and we meet all their needs. Until it's time for them to leave the farm to be harvested, we strive to make their lives as comfortable and as stress free as possible. We even choose processors that are Animal Welfare Approved" to do our harvesting.

As an aside, we have been accused from time to time, by our children, of caring more for the cattle than we did for them! They are kidding... I think! ☺



Beef you can trust!

How To Buy Cattle...

Most of you will probably never find yourself in a situation where you need to evaluate and choose cattle to purchase. If you had asked me 10 years ago, I would have said, “No way, the closest I ever want to be to buying cattle is buying a couple of Ribeyes!”. Life is an amazing journey and you just never know...



Anyway, I thought that some of you may be interested in a few of the things that we've learned about buying cattle. The obvious things to look for are the physical characteristics. Regardless of whether or not you are buying a steer, heifer, open (meaning not pregnant) cow, bred (meaning pregnant) cow or cow/calf pair (meaning a cow who still has a nursing (not yet weaned) calf by her side, you want a solid, well muscled frame and we prefer a shorter animal. The back should be straight and the head should be held high. You should see a slight outline of the ribs but they should not be obvious. The animals eyes should be bright and clear. If you are buying a cow, you are buying a female that has already calved, at least once. As opposed to a heifer (animal that has not yet calved), the cow should have a symmetrical udder. The symmetry of the udder is actually quite important in determining how much milk she will be able to produce to feed a future calf.

If you are buying a cow/calf pair, you really need to delve, just a little, into a couple of the psychological aspects. The questions you want answered are, has the momma been someone's pet? If she has, you surely don't want her, as she will be extremely difficult to manage. Cattle can only be moved or encouraged to comply with your wishes if there is some small amount of apprehension toward people, you included, within the cow. When you approach a cow, or other

animal, at some point you come within what is referred to as her/his 'flight zone'. When you do, the animal will move away from you. When you manage your approach properly with a knowledge of how the animal will react, and in which direction, the animal is 'manageable' and you will be able to move her/him to where she needs to be. An ideal 'flight zone' will extend to a radius of about 10 feet from the animals shoulders.

To test an animals flight zone, all you have to do is approach her slowly and calmly. Cows have a 300 to 330 degree field of vision, so you can approach from almost any angle except directly behind. If when you get to about 10 feet, the animal moves away, she is a good candidate for purchase.

If you are buying a cow with a calf by her side, you can pretty easily evaluate her 'mothering' skills or protective nature. What you are looking for is how protective she is of her calf. This is a little subjective but you can get a reasonable idea by watching momma and calf for a bit until they drift apart a little. When they do, approach the pair in a way that will put you directly between the cow and her calf. She should not be overtly confrontational but she should move to put herself between you and the calf and she should be looking directly at you with a "not a good idea" kind of look. The look is easy to recognize. This is ideal behavior and you can count on her being protective of her calf. If she does become confrontational, she's better left behind because there will be many times when you must work with the calf without the cow becoming aggressive!

As an anecdote, we bought our first cow/calf pair before we had an appreciation of the value of the psychological aspects. We did well on physical characteristics and brought home a fine looking first calf cow, straight back, relatively low to the ground, bright eyes, etc., etc. with a great looking calf by her side. All was good! Well, not so much. We still have her but she is a very difficult cow to work and she has few qualms about wandering off to graze, leaving her calf in the dust, so to speak. So, lesson learned! ☺

Did You Know...

Much of the work that we do and a Vet needs to do to check out a cow's overall health is done from behind.

Cows have very few natural defenses and are referred to as 'prey' animals, not 'predator' animals. Unfortunately, the one defense they have is to kick. Cows can kick with any of their four legs but the hind legs are the ones that are most dangerous! If you are behind her and she is upset, she can kick, break your leg or worse, and return her leg to the ground in less than ¼ of a second!

What you may not know is a technique that 'tends' to keep a cow from kicking is to lift her tail. If you lift her tail straight up to a near vertical position, more often than not, she will not kick. If you research the actual mechanics of why this works most of the time on the internet, you are probably going to find a different answer from each post. Even Vets seem to disagree.



Cows On The Wrong Side Of Fences...

We had 2 calls last month from different customers about cattle near our farm being out on, or near, the roadway.

First, we want to thank those who called and encourage everyone to do so. In neither of these instances were the cows ours but 2 things happened immediately. We did a count of our animals to make sure they were all on the side of the fence that they are supposed to be on and second, we drove to the reported location to see if we could help the owner of the cattle get them back to where they were supposed to be.

Cattle are always testing fences to see if they can get to that greener grass on the other side. Sooner or later everyone's cattle get out and I'm sure I speak for all cattle men, reporting the problem before either the animal is hurt or the animal causes a person to be hurt is greatly appreciated! If you are unable to tell who the cows may belong to, you can always call the Sheriff's Office and file a report. Most cattlemen in the area register with the Sheriff's Office for just these kinds of situations. Thanks again!

Beef you can trust!