

# Five Oaks Beef

Five Oaks Family Farm Monthly Newsletter

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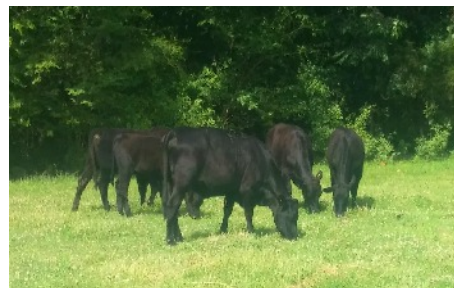
## On The Farm...

Today at Five Oaks Family Farm was calf weighing day! We weigh them every couple of months as it is one of the best ways to identify calves that otherwise look good, but may not be feeling well. I am pleased to report that all are within expected weight ranges for their ages and all look well.

They really don't like being gathered up from the pasture, restrained and weighed and they do grumble a lot, but all in all, they were pretty cooperative ☺.

For those of you new to our Newsletter, we have about 13 acres here at Five Oaks Family Farm and rent another 40 acres of pasture across town at the Newell Farm. We keep weaned calves, transition calves and feeder calves here at the Five Oaks Family Farm where we can keep a close eye on them. Brood cows (or

in the local vernacular, Momma Cows) and young calves, still nursing stay at the Newell Farm. We also have a bull in with the cows and their calves at Newell. He just arrived about two weeks ago and will be with us for about three months total.



We had the pasture mowed at the Newell Farm and mowed our west pasture ourselves here at Five Oaks. Next week, we will be mowing our east pasture, transition pen, feeder pen and corral.

Some of you may be wondering why we mow our pastures. Isn't the point to grow as much grass as possible? The answer is that yes, it is, but making the grass more accessible is even more important. Fescue is our primary grazing grass (and yes, this is quite likely the same grass type that you have in your yard). You may notice this time of year as you drive around Warren County, that many

pastures currently have fescue “seed heads” popping up above the underlying grass. Cattle spend 8-10 hours a day grazing and find the seed heads to be annoying to have to get around to get to the grass. They are also potentially problematic in that they irritate the calves eyes which can result in pink-eye, which can be a serious problem in cattle. So... we mow with the mower height set very high to clip off the seed heads and leave as much grass as possible!

## Five Oaks Beef Availability...

As most of you know, many of our customers order beef even before we have it in stock, which is great for us because it helps us schedule our production. We call this “pre-ordering” and in many cases we are nearly sold out of Five Oaks Beef before we even pick it up from our processor. We are working very hard to increase our capacity, and we are thanking our customers who are willing to pre-order and wait for up to three to four weeks for their delivery with a 5% Discount!

## The Life Cycle Of A Steak...

I mentioned above that we are working hard to increase our capacity to the point where we can at least keep up with the demand. For many beef producers, there are a number of “quick fixes” available, but we will use none of them here at Five Oaks Beef!

The fastest way to get a calf to the processor is to implant Artificial Growth Hormones. These implants can dramatically increase the rate of weight gain of a calf. Another is to wean early and feed massive amounts of grain throughout the calf’s life. This usually results in sick calves that are then kept alive on feed based antibiotics. Both of these techniques are the foundation of “factory farm, feed-lot, supermarket beef profitability.

We’ve never used any of these techniques and we never will! You can be assured that when you buy beef from Five Oaks Beef, it will be natural, healthy and delicious! You have our word on it.



For us, increasing capacity is a protracted process. This leads me to the title of this article, “The Life Cycle Of A Steak”. Here is is whole

process.

The Five Oaks Beef Ribeye that you may be grilling tonight actually began with the breeding and conception of a calf, more often than not, a bull calf. We keep a bull with the cows/heifers for three months so each cow/heifer will have at least 4 opportunities to conceive. If the cow/heifer does conceive, a calf is born approximately 9 ½ months later.

The newborn calf will remain with his Momma until he ‘becomes a steer’ and is weaned in about 7 months. During that time, he will nurse two to three times per day, more frequently initially. The calf will also begin to graze, grass in the summertime and hay in the wintertime, and begin to drink water.

Quantities of forage and water will be small at first and gradually increase, but Momma will take care of the vast majority of the calf’s dietary needs.

After weaning, the calf will rejoin his Momma and the rest of the herd and by this time will be self sufficient. He will remain with the herd for another 10 months growing at the rate of about 2 pounds per day.

At the age of 17 months, weighing about 900 pounds, in addition to his normal diet of grass/hay, we introduce a carefully formulated amount of a blend of grains into his diet. To our steer, this special grain blend is like getting a little cake and ice cream each day! They love it and it begins to introduce a small amount of fat into the muscle tissue (the beef). This fat causes marbling in the meat which dramatically

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# Beef you can trust!

increases flavor and tenderness! At about 20 months of age the steer is harvested and the beef is dry aged for at least 14 days. The 14 days reduces water content by about 10%, leaving concentrated flavor in the natural juices of the meat. Your great Five Oaks Beef Ribeye is now cut from the rib section, individually vacuum packed and quick frozen to preserve freshness and overall quality for 9 to 10 months!



If you have been tallying up the time involved, you should find that your steak first began about 33 to 34 months before you started the grill! Yes, almost three years! This means that we are planning now for what we think our beef needs will be three years from now!

### **Did You Know...**

Cattle have no upper teeth but instead a smooth ‘dental plate’ against which the lower teeth grind and shred forage. This makes grazing much easier for them.

### **The Hierarchy Of The Herd...**

Cattle live collectively as a herd, derive security from the herd and become very uncomfortable when they are separated from it. The herd is very hierarchical with clear leaders and followers. In fact, each member of the herd occupies a particular place in the herd hierarchy. An animal’s position in the herd hierarchy is established based primarily on a ritual of strength and once established, rarely changes.

The ritual occurs when an animal currently in the herd wishes to elevate itself or a new animal is introduced into the herd.

The ritual begins with a general ‘sizing up’ of one animal by the other and then is followed by a lot of ‘head pushing’. Head pushing is not at all like ‘head butting’. With cattle, the two animals rather gently put their foreheads together and try to push each other out of the way testing each other’s strength.

One animal will gain control temporarily and cause the other to back up. With foreheads in contact, he or she can push the other for 15 or 20 yards and then with a burst of strength, the other can gain control and stop it’s retreat and begin pushing. It can go like this at times for up to an hour, which seems to be a test of stamina.

At some point, one animal, probably as a result of exhaustion, concedes and the winner has positioned himself or herself above the vanquished in the herd hierarchy.

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# **Beef you can trust!**