



ELLETT VALLEY BEEF CO.

August 2011 Newsletter

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FARM UPDATE



It was my intention to write a brief newsletter back in February, when the cold weather made working outside lonely and unpleasant, but the weather changed for the better so I started some fencing projects and the newsletter was put aside. From mid-February to the end of March about 2.5 miles of high tensile electric fence were constructed, amid the usual tasks of feeding and managing cattle. The new fence enclosed one big boundary and separated it into ten paddocks, which has

enhanced our rotational grazing program substantially and has resulted in a huge increase in forage production and forage quality.

At Ellett Valley Beef Co. April and May are the main calving months so quite a bit of time was spent recording births and monitoring new calves, along with shifting the herds to fresh pasture daily. In late May we started MOB Grazing, which is a planned high-density grazing concept that mimics the grazing patterns of the huge buffalo herds of the past. It amounts to placing a large number of cattle on a very small paddock for a very short period of time.



For instance, typically I will put 100,000 lbs. of cattle (or more) on a one-acre paddock for 24 hours, then move them to a new one. The cattle won't return to that paddock for 75-90 days. This extended rest period allows the grass to put down deep roots. In addition, the manure and urine are concentrated in a small area, the hoof action of the cattle works the soil surface and exposes the seed bank, grass and forbs are stomped into the ground to feed the soil microbes, and

the cattle compete for forage and thus utilize it much more efficiently. All this results in healthier soil and healthier cattle, and it eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Like most worthwhile endeavors it requires a bit of effort and planning.

Throughout the summer my main concerns are managing the grass, shifting the cattle to new grass daily, and getting the cows bred back. Currently we're working on a big embryo transfer project that will help us produce more Pure Devon cattle.

BEEF UPDATE

Our next batch of healthy grassfed beef will be ready around September 1, and I must say I'm very excited about it. The ½ Devon steers in this group gained weight quickly and consistently through the hot summer and were in excellent condition. This batch of beef should be our best to date, and the batches throughout this fall should be equally good or better. The Devon grass genetics are really working for us.



ELLETT VALLEY BEEF CO.

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Pricing Update - GOOD NEWS!!

Cattle are selling at historic high levels now, so is grain, and the price of commodity beef in the grocery stores is increasing. Fuel and fertilizer and most other farm inputs are selling at crazy prices. These trends will likely continue. However, we have **DECREASED** our prices on the larger beef packages. We can do this because: 1) We don't have to buy any cattle, we raise our own. 2) Our expenses, as grassfed producers, are not increasing like those of commodity producers; we don't buy fertilizer, we don't buy grain, and we don't use the tractor very much. 3) By eliminating local delivery we've reduced costs and can pass the saving on to our customers.

Grassfed beef must be competitive with commodity beef if the grassfed movement is to be sustainable. That's one reason I don't sell individual cuts of beef and I don't participate in farmers' markets—the prices are too high for my taste. I'm just not interested in selling steaks for \$12-\$20 per lb., and that's what the market seems to be.

WEBSITE UPDATE AND NEW BULL



Our website has been recently updated and I urge you to check it out when you get a chance. Please notice the addition of a new bull, Rotokawa 375 "Revolution." We're very excited about him.

The new site includes something called "Guille's Corner" (not too crazy about the name) which will give me a format to write occasional observations on

cattle, grazing, poets, dung beetles, Faulkner, horses, and other subjects but mostly cattle. I don't have the first piece ready yet but will see to it shortly, unless another fence project gets in the way.

Thanks for your interest in Ellett Valley Beef. Peace be with you.

Guille R. Yearwood
Ellett Valley Beef Co.

DELIVERY CHANGE

In the past we've offered free delivery to local customers and I really enjoyed making the deliveries. However, people are so busy these days that it's very difficult to schedule and coordinate deliveries, and higher fuel prices make it cost-prohibitive. Plus my son's away at college and I don't have any help with the heavy lifting. So, it was a tough decision but we'll no longer be offering local delivery. Customers can pick up their orders at our office/distribution point in Christiansburg at designated times. When the beef arrives we'll let you know what the pickup times will be, probably something like M-F 4:00 – 6:00 and Sat 8:00 – 12:00. Once you know the pickup times please let us know when you're coming so your order will be ready. We'll try to accommodate special pickup times for those who need them.

Our office is at the intersection of N. Franklin and Sara St., across from the Aquatic Center, the next building down from the CVS.

We still ship beef by FEDEX anywhere in the Continental U.S.