

PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC & GREEN BUILDING PROJECT



SUSTAINABLE FARMING : GRASS FED/FINISHED BEEF

PLEASE NOTE:

Everything included in "Sustainable Farming : Cattle" has been transposed directly from the website. That includes references to the PlayHaven Farm LLC and Green Building Project (PHF&GBP) website pages, external websites, links to documents, etc. Because of how quickly things change on the internet, there are NO links from this document.

GRASS FED/FINISHED BEEF FOR SALE

What sets my beef apart from the rest starts with my choice of breed and continues with how they live and what they eat.

I decided on Belted Galloway to start my venture into cattle because they are calm, good natured and take to 'strip grazing' readily. Additionally, being a Scottish breed developed to survive harsh winters in spite of poor grass conditions, I figured they would do well on our 'needing improvement' pasture.

Different breeds of cattle store fat differently and the Belted Galloway is known for their lean muscle meat. Plus, because they grow a heavy winter coat, they don't need as much back fat as other breeds; resulting in a much healthier red meat.

Most beef for sale these days come from animals fed corn and/or other grains. Even those that are pastured are usually 'finished' on grain to put on weight before they are processed. (More weight equals more money... regardless of quality.) Learn more about Grass Fed/Finished Beef below.

My cattle never get corn, hormones or antibiotics. They live solely on pasture (with a supplement of Thorvin Kelp, sea salt and bicarbonate of soda) -- year round. I have hay harvested from my pasture (or a trusted, like-minded source) and feed that back to the cattle during the winter while allowing them to graze for tidbits they may have missed earlier in the year.

I use Management Intensive Grazing (commonly known as strip grazing or mob grazing) to get the highest efficiency from the small amount of land I have. The Belted Galloway is a medium-frame cow and that translates to being able to have more of them per acre for even more efficient use of pasture.

I would rather sell a smaller amount of meat of high quality than a lot of low quality meat. This is because I am DEVOTED to providing my customers the healthiest and tastiest beef possible.

All this boils down to a higher price for grass fed/finished beef. I may never understand how the beef producers can charge so little for their feedlot/grain finished beef.

Mine is a small farm and I currently (as of January 2016) maintain one (1) bull, three (3) cow/calf pairs and two (2) beef steers.



Belted Galloway Cattle, a breed that converts grass/foliage to meat very efficiently and is both winter and summer hardy.

Here are some articles I found via the internet that have some great information about the healthy aspects of Belted Galloway meat:

- The Beef Site: Belted Galloway; <http://www.thebeefsite.com/breeds/beef/9/belted-galloway/overview>
- 2014 Beef Study by the US Belted Galloway Society (pdf attached),
- Comparisons in 1994 by A.R.C. Butson, MD (pdf attached)
- Reprint of London's Financial Times, Sept 10, 2000 via US Belted Galloway Society (pdf attached)

Info on Grass fed/finished beef:

- Beefboard.org: Fact sheet (pdf attached)
- Grass Fed vs. Corn Fed: You Are What Your Food Eats (pdf attached)
- Why Grass Fed Trumps Grain Fed; <http://chriskresser.com/why-grass-fed-trumps-grain-fed>

How to cook Grass fed/finished beef:

- Cooking Grass Fed Beef (pdf attached)

HOW TO BUY PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC'S GRASS FED/FINISHED BEEF

Beef is ONLY sold through 'Cowpooling' and orders must be received by March 15. Depending on how many Shares are sold on a cow, there may be meat that is owned only by PlayHaven Farm LLC. If that is the case, that meat will be packaged at a USDA processor and MAY be available for sale directly.

The 2016 price for Cowpooling Shares is \$4.00 lb/live weight (assuming a 700 lb beef animal at processing time).

If you have found this website after the deadline for 2016, you can get a share in one of the 2017 beef animals. If you cannot buy a Cowpooling Share this year, but plan to do so next year, please indicate on the Order Form what size Share so I can have adequate stock on hand. You can get the 2016 Order Form by sending an email or making a phone call... see the "Contact Us" page.

The Newsletter and Yearly Order Form goes out sometime in February each year. The time between the order form going out and the deadline is only a couple weeks and I do that to encourage you to NOT DELAY your decision making. Current Cowpooling customers are allowed to reserve their Cowpooling Share early... this is a Loyalty Perk.

I understand that most people are not used to ordering their meat several months prior to receiving it and especially not accounting for an entire year. I also understand that for some people the large outlay of money can be problematic. This is why it is good to plan ahead; for example, you could use a 'Christmas Account' method of putting the money needed for next year's order into a savings account each month. That way, the money is available to buy the next year's beef (chicken, etc.).

I instituted a deposit requirement in 2014. When you send in your order, please also send a check for HALF the total. I do not ship and you are agreeing to pick up your beef at the processing plant, at which time you will pay the balance due. I am not set-up to take credit cards this year... please do not send cash through the mail.

COWPOOLING PROGRAM

'Cowpooling' is when multiple people own shares in a live beef animal. This is how we small livestock producers can sell directly to you, the consumer, while staying within the law. Your share is based on how much of the animal you want: the whole thing, half of it, a quarter (split-half). When the time comes to process the animal, you pick up your share from the processor and pay them for that service (usually no more than \$0.75/lb hanging weight). You will also pay any balance due to us at that time. In

2016, I will again be sending the beef to be processed in June. I have chosen Paradise Locker Meats in Trimble MO to process in 2016.

FIGURING OUT THE PRICE (Don't worry if it takes you a few times reading this to 'get it'.)

When the beef animal is delivered to the processor it comes in with a 'live weight'. That is generally an estimate by the farmer because most of us don't have scales big enough to actually weigh the live animal. The processor will remove the hide, head, hooves and tail along with the insides and what is left is called the carcass (or meat) which is measured with a 'hanging weight'. Typically, the hanging weight is about 60% of the live weight. (The organ meats are not included in this weight.) From the hanging weight, you can expect to receive 65 to 70% of packaged meat due to shrinkage, the removal of bones, the type of cuts and trim waste.

FOR EXAMPLE: Assuming the beef animal will have a live weight around 700 lbs. and using \$4.00 per lb/live weight; ***here's the math of how what you pay for live weight and processing translates to what you spend per pound in total for meat: **Please note the example IS using the 2016 Price per lb/live weight.*****

Whole Share: 700 lbs X \$4.00 = **\$2,800 to PlayHaven Farm LLC**

700 X 60% = 420 lbs Hanging Weight

420 X 70% = **294 lbs Packaged Weight**

Processing Fee: 420 X \$0.75 = **\$315 to the processor**

Results: \$2,800 + \$315 = \$3,115 ÷ 294 lbs = \$10.60/lb

Half Share: 700 ÷ 2 = 350 lbs X \$4.00 = **\$1,400 to PlayHaven Farm LLC**

700 X 60% ÷ 2 = 210 lbs Hanging Weight

210 X 70% = **147 lb Packaged Weight**

Processing Fee: 210 X \$0.75 = **\$157.50 to the processor**

Results: \$1,400 + \$157.50 = \$1,557.50 ÷ 147 lbs = \$10.60 lb

Split-Half Share: 700 ÷ 4 = 175 lbs X \$4.00 = **\$700 to PlayHaven Farm LLC**

700 X 60% ÷ 4 = 105 lbs Hanging Weight

105 X 70% = **73.5 lb Packaged Weight**

Processing Fee: 105 X \$0.75 = **\$78.75 to the processor**

Results: \$700 + \$78.75 = \$778.75 ÷ 73.5 lbs = \$10.60 lb

My 2016 price is \$4.00 per pound/live-weight. You are purchasing a Share in a Live Animal which is why the price is for live-weight. Please see the 'Figuring the Price' example.

◇◇◇ **A deposit equal to half of the total using the estimated live weight** ◇◇◇

◇◇◇ **is required with order and the balance is due when you pick up your meat.** ◇◇◇

According to my spreadsheet \$4.00/lb live weight translates to \$6.67/lb hanging weight and \$9.52/lb package weight (because the percentages between the stages don't change), not including processing. I encourage you to shop around! The current price for grass fed/finished HAMBURGER in my local grocery store is \$10.00/lb and premium cuts go up from there. If you can find comparable beef for a lower price, be sure it is truly comparable and buy it!

I won't know the actual hanging weight until the processor tells me. SO, it is entirely possible that the grand total will be different from the example, but the price per pound total won't change. For example, if the hanging weight is actually 480 lbs then the balance due will be higher and if it is 390, the balance due to PlayHaven Farm LLC will be lower. The example is an ESTIMATE of what you can expect to pay.

The processor will contact each share-owner to determine all the particulars about your meat and they will also set the date for you to pick up your portion of meat et al.

MEAT ACCOUNT

Here is a suggestion to help reduce the problem of paying for your yearly amount of meat in two (2) lump payments:

Figure out what you want to buy next time, how much it will cost in total and divide that total by 12. (You may need to buy a freezer or get a meat locker, so include that cost as well.) Then, set up a "Meat Account" (I use a savings account at my bank.) into which you put the money you came up with (when you divided by 12) into your Meat Account every month. That way you will have saved enough money to cover your years worth of meat ahead of time and it won't be a big strain on your budget all at once.

WHOLE/HALF/SPLIT-HALF... HOW MUCH SHOULD I GET?

When figuring how much to get, you'll want to take some things into account:

- *How much space do I have to store it?*
- *How long will it withstand freezer burn?*
- *How much can I afford?*

My beef is a seasonal item because I only have a few animals and take them in one trip to be processed. I am not a warehouse... so when you get beef from me you are ordering a bulk amount and storing it yourself. Therefore, you will need freezer (or meat locker) space enough for whatever you order. A rule of thumb is one cubic foot of freezer space for each 35-40 pounds of cut and wrapped meat. Allow slightly more space when the meat is packaged in odd shapes. The processor we are using packs the meat so it will last up to a year in a good freezer.

If you cannot buy a Cowpooling Share this year, but plan to do so next year, please indicate on the Order Form what size Share so I can have adequate stock on hand. Please and Thank You.

WHAT IF DEMAND EXCEEDS SUPPLY?

If there is more interest in the Belted Galloway grass fed/finished beef than I currently have to sell, I know a couple of farms who also have Belted Galloway (and/or crosses) that I should be able to purchase stock from to fulfill your orders. I trust these people and know they are as finicky about their grass fed/finished beef as we are. I would buy them 'on the hoof' and send them with our steer(s) to be custom processed.

I will fulfill shares (first received, first served) from my stock first and those people are guaranteed the price quoted. ***Purchasing additional stock may necessitate that I increase my price to fulfill the remaining shares.*** If that is the case, I WILL CONTACT everyone affected to allow them the opportunity to withdraw their order, if they choose.

HOW YOU GET YOUR SHARE

I have to schedule processing several months in advance. As soon as I know the hanging weight, I will contact you with the amount that is due to PlayHaven Farm LLC. The processor will contact each share-owner to determine all the particulars about your meat and they will also set the date for you to pick up your portion of meat et al.

If you are getting a Whole or a Half share, you will need to provide instructions to the processor with exactly how you want the meat cut and packaged (to assure you get the correct serving sizes for your family and that your favorite steaks are included in the processing order).

If you are getting a Split-Half, you will not be able to provide specific cutting instructions, but instead will be required to take normal cutting and packaging. This is because the back quarter of the beef contains different cuts than the front quarter, so simply purchasing a quarter doesn't give you the full selection of cuts you would expect. Thus, Split-Halves are partially from the front quarter, and partially from the back quarter, for a full selection. Thus you are 'splitting' the side with another share-owner.

WHAT WILL I GET IN MY SHARE?

I've included the standard diagram of what cuts come from where for beef. As stated previously, the Split-Half is a combination of cuts from both the front and back quarters resulting in the same cuts as you get from a Half, only less of everything.

WHAT ABOUT THE ORGANS? (UPDATE: JULY 2014)

Once again, an excellent question. It is very difficult to evenly distribute the organs in this Cowpooling scenario; therefore, they are not included in it at all. Buying a share in one of our Cowpooled Belted Galloway Steers gets you a share of the muscle meat (also suet and bones, if you like).

I did not have a clue what the processor would allow us to keep in the way of organs when I took our first steer in. Assuming I use the same processor next time, the organs that will be sold separately are:

- Tongue (difficult to divide into shares, will only be sold whole)
- Liver (easy to divide up, but since not everyone likes liver... will sell this separately)
- Heart (can be divided, but not everyone likes heart... will sell separately)
- Sweatbread (too small to divide, will only be sold whole)
- Kidney (too small to divide, will only be sold whole)

Pricing fluctuates widely on these items... I suppose it has something to do with high demand for grass-fed/finished beef organs. I will provide pricing **ONLY TO PEOPLE WHO CONTACT ME FOR THE INFORMATION**. Please contact me if you are interested in purchasing organs from my beefs.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GRASS FED/FINISHED BEEF

What is 'Grass Fed/Finished Beef?' Very succinctly, Grass Fed/Finished Beef comes from cattle that eat the way their ancestors did before humans got involved. Seems to me that we should be able to just call it 'beef' and make the folk who insist on putting their cattle into feedlots and forcing them to eat any other way add words to 'beef' to describe their abnormal practices. Heavy Sigh... unfortunately, that's not the way it works. Hopefully, someday this will turn around. In the meantime, here's a primer on cattle:

Cattle are from the subfamily Bovinae (you may recognize that, since Bovine is a common term for a cow) and are ruminants (among other characteristics). Being a ruminant, cattle get their nutrition from plants (foliage) by fermenting it in their stomach system. The whole process is rather complicated considering they have several stomachs and have to regurgitate what they ingest (the cud) to chew it again so it is broken down enough to move on after swallowing it. In fact, according to the dictionary, the digestive process called 'rumination' means 'to chew over again'.

A HISTORY LESSON

Until the 1940s, all domesticated cattle were grass fed/finished. It is because of World War II that this changed. To put it VERY simply... during the war, nitrogen was a prime component of high explosives and when the war ended there were manufacturing plants no longer needed to produce them and lots and lots of leftover nitrogen to find a new use for. So the manufacturing plants were adjusted to turn it into fertilizer. This made fertilizers cheap and easier to apply than good old fashioned manure.

With the abundance of fertilizers, farmers were able to increase their yield of corn because they felt they could skip the rotation system that helped the soil recover from the nitrogen stripping corn plants. Instead, they put nitrogen-rich fertilizer on the land and planted corn in the same fields year after year.

This also made the land more valuable for corn production than for pasture. Enter the feedlot... only the breeding stock stay on pasture (and are fed grain supplements) while the young cattle are put into large groups living in feedlots and feed corn and supplements designed to increase their weight quickly. With this monoculture attitude came diseases and toxic waste which the industry found ways to get around (like putting antibiotics into the feed) instead of seeing this as a sign that the new system is flawed at the concept level. (I'm not even going to get into things like Mad Cow Disease... you can search out that stuff yourself.)

After several generations, humans are seeing the consequences of that flawed concept and while the industry itself is blind; many people are demanding that their food not be toxic to them any longer.

AN OLD DAY IS DAWNING

So, to differentiate the healthy, old-fashioned, mimicking nature produced beef from the modern, toxic way; we put 'Grass Fed/Finished' in front of 'Beef' when the cattle are born in the pasture, graze the pasture (all year round) and end their days never having been fed corn/grain supplements.

It takes more effort and time to create a meat animal this way, but eating healthy meat is worth it. At least I think so... don't you?

I'M NOT SO MUCH A CATTLE PRODUCER AS A GRASS GROWER

You'll find many articles on the internet about how cattle grazing has degraded the land and while that is true, it is because of the WAY those cattle were allowed to live on the land. It's all about management of resources.

This is where Management Intensive Grazing (or Mob Grazing) comes into the discussion. You see, the key is to not let the cattle eat their favorite tid-bits down to the ground day after day. When cattle are left to eat only the things they want, they end up killing those plants. So we take a lesson from nature and look at the massive herds of bison (for example) that traveled the plains of the United States. Those huge animals pounded the soil with their massive hooves, ate and walked... always on the move. In the process they consumed just the tops of the grasses/foliage, left a wonderful distribution of manure and urine (as in, not concentrated), and trampled the uneaten forage which then protects and feeds the life in the soil.

More information on Management Intensive Grazing/Mob Grazing is available here:

- Managed Intensive Rotation Grazing (wikipedia); http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Managed_intensive_rotational_grazing
- The Art & Science of Management-intensive Grazing (pdf slideshow attached)

When you concentrate on the soil health, everything else falls into place. I've discussed Soil Health in the Sustainable Farming section of my blog. My job, as I see it, is to feed the microorganisms that live in the soil so they help the plants to grow, which then my cattle eat. When you think of it this way, beef is a by-product of soil health. Heck, EVERYTHING is a by-product of soil health.



SMALL FARM, SMALL HERD ... A MOB?

If you are like me, you are scratching your head wondering how a few cattle -- which is what my herd currently is -- can be considered a mob especially after reading the information provided on the links. I originally had concerns about this, but it's not the number of animals you have on the land that matters... it is how much space those animals are given each day so that they eat, trample and poop on it and then move to the next space the next day. With large numbers of animals, they talk about pounds per acre... with our few animals, we talk about pounds per square yard.

Another terminology for this kind of management is 'strip grazing'. It might be easier to think of it that way with a few animals. Recently, another farmer told me that strip grazing is another word for a starvation diet. Well, that was a surprise to me! My cattle are anything BUT starved! You don't see a rib on my cattle, they are nice and round and filled out.

Here's how it's done on my farm. I work out a tentative layout for the year and take into consideration where I started the cattle the previous year so I don't start them in the same place the next time. Rotation is also for encouraging different types of grass/foliage to grow throughout the entire range over the whole growing season... diversity is important. My husband assists me with setting up the electric polywire and posts to create about a week's worth of rotation at a time. We make sure to put in an 'alley' (an area that each day's allotment can be opened onto) so the cattle can always get to water and shade. The alley is going to end up being over eaten and overly trampled etc. so it's important to remember to not use it as the alley during the next rotation over that area. I make sure that the cattle don't go back into an area for at least six weeks (longer if there are drought or other factors delaying growth) so the soil life can do their thing and the plants have a chance to rest and grow. A rule of thumb that was provided at a Soil Health workshop I went to was to let the cattle back into an area when it looks like it has not been grazed at all. Since my cattle eat grass all year round, I store some hay in addition to 'stock-piling' grass by removing it from the rotation around September.

I cut hay on part of the acreage that will have the required recovery time before the animals get on it. I prefer custom/square bales that can be handled without a tractor. It is stored under cover with good ventilation and left to cure for winter feeding.

Water is always available and winter brings it's special issues because it's gets really cold here. In the warm weather, I use heavy duty hoses to transport the water from the field hydrant to the water tank and simply fill them as needed. During the winter, the water tank gets put as close to the field hydrant as possible and a heating element is placed in the bottom to keep the water from freezing. The hose is disconnected from the field hydrant when not filling the tank and emptied after each use to keep it from freezing.

Thorvin kelp, sea salt and bicarbonate of soda are also provided in a free-choice bin. These are the only supplements I provide. I keep Basic H on hand in a sprayer in case the flies get annoying during the summer (a quick spray over their backs is all it takes). I have not had to worry about worming and if my management is working, I shouldn't ever have to.

Since I have a small amount of acreage, I open the entire pasture to the cattle after the ground freezes (cuz all the plants are dormant and have sent their energy into their roots to await the spring growth). I let them wander to find any tidbits that they missed previously and provide them with hay. When the winter is winding down and the forecast tells me that spring is close at hand, I block the majority of the pasture off again and restrict the cattle to their stock-piled area with supplemental hay. Then it is just a matter of watching for the grass et al to burst into view and I start the rotation/management all over again. When you focus on management you end up with improved pasture every year. The better the pasture, the more grasses et al grow and the animals have more to eat.