

SUSTAINABLE FARMING

INCORPORATING AWA NEWSLETTER

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CELEBRATE SUCCESS



News that a national consumer survey by the Hartman Group—a leading authority on demand-side trends in the food industry—found that the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW logo has the highest impact on consumer purchasing among any contemporary food certification label (see opposite) comes at a very special time. 2018 marks the year that we are also celebrating the many farmers and ranchers who embark on their 10th year of certification.

From humble beginnings, Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW has rapidly grown to become North America’s most “highly meaningful” food label for farm animal welfare, outdoor access and sustainability, according to respected Consumer Reports. At a time when greenwashing and misleading labels are rampant in the food industry, it’s hugely rewarding to know our steadfast commitment to robust farm standards and certification integrity—while remaining practical and achievable to most farmers and ranchers out there—is resulting in ever-greater levels of consumer recognition and trust.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the many farmers and ranchers with whom we work. They manage more than 3 million acres across 42 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces, and who are quite literally making our vision of a sustainable future a reality. So we’re using this issue to celebrate some of those who first certified back in 2008. It has been fascinating to find out how they feel the market has changed over the last decade; how our trusted farm certification has helped communicate the benefits of their farming practices to customers; and how they see the future unfolding. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication to high-welfare, sustainable management, as well as their work to raise awareness about the program. We wish them all continued success.

To reiterate the message from our Communications and Outreach Director, Emily Moose (see opposite), now is the time to make the most of your hard-earned logo. Use it on your website and marketing materials. Take advantage of our free label design service, worth hundreds of dollars alone. Order a new farm gate sign or vinyl banner for your market stall. With 77 percent of consumers saying they are “much/somewhat more likely to purchase” after seeing the logo on a product, it really is a no-brainer.

Andrew Grooten

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TOP LABEL

New report confirms AGW’s food label has highest impact on purchasing

The Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW label has the highest impact on consumer purchasing behavior of any food certification label, according to a new report by The Hartman Group, a leading international food and beverage market research company.

Since 2010, the Hartman Group has analyzed how consumers understand, prioritize and connect with the concept of sustainability (personal, social, environmental and economical), exploring differences between consumer demand for and actual purchasing of sustainable products.

Hartman’s latest *Sustainability 2017* report analyzes consumer responses to 23 of the most common claims, certifications and seals found on food and beverage packaging. A nationally representative survey, carried out in summer 2017, reveals that 36 percent of consumers are familiar with the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW logo, and a significant majority (77 percent) say they are “much/somewhat more likely to purchase” after seeing it on a product, making it the food label with the highest impact on consumer purchasing.

“Today’s consumers want to make better purchase decisions, and to do this they want to be better informed. They want to know ‘what’s inside’ before they buy,” according to the new report. “Third-party certifications are key for engaged sustainability consumers, who look primarily for seals showing organic, fair-trade and non-GMO, and indicating animal welfare.”

“We’re thrilled with the results. It shows that when consumers see the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW label, they buy it,” says Emily Moose, AGW’s Director of Communication and



Outreach. “The Hartman Group’s statistics validate what we’ve been seeing anecdotally: consumers are increasingly hungry for reliable information about sustainability, and trusted third-party certifications now play a key role in their purchasing decisions. We’re proud to be a home for labels that meet consumer expectations and ensure the viability of high-welfare, sustainable farms.”

“If you’re not already proudly displaying your hard-earned AGW logos on your food packaging, websites and other marketing materials, now is the time to make it happen! We offer a range of branded promotional materials and can even help design new product labeling—just get in touch and we’ll be glad to help.”

Professional labeling support and merchandise is available to certified farmers and ranchers, as well as businesses selling certified products. Contact your regional Farmer and Market Outreach Coordinator (see page 20) for more information. For full details of AGW’s promotional materials, visit animalwelfareapproved.us/merchandise

IN THE NEWS...

OBESITY COSTS

Obesity rates have risen dramatically in the U.S., driving up healthcare costs by 29 percent since 2001. A new Cornell University study found the overall percentage of U.S. national medical expenditures devoted to treating obesity-related illness in adults rose from 6.13 percent in 2001 to 7.91 percent in 2015, an increase of 29 percent. North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin now spend over 12 percent of all health care dollars on taking care of people with complications from obesity.

FARMERS FUNDED

Seven farmers received Fund-a-Farmer Grants from the Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) to help them become Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW. They were among 28 independent farmers in 19 states across the U.S. to be awarded grants ranging from \$374 to \$2,500 from FACT, a national nonprofit that promotes the safe and high-welfare production of meat, milk and eggs. A total of \$66,000 grants were awarded this year for projects that improve farm animal welfare. Visit foodanimalconcernstrust.org/farmer



FARMER OF THE YEAR

Ronald Simmons of Master Blend Family Farms was recently named 2018 Small Farmer of the Year by North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University. Simmons raises Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW pigs outdoors on pasture at 30-acre Master Blend Family Farms, near Kenansville, NC. Simmons accepted the award (left) with his wife, Laurita, and thanked his family and team of workers for their support and dedication. Congratulations to the Master Blend Family Farms team!

STANDARDS UPDATE

The 2018 Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards are now available online, following the recent annual review process. Key changes include the acceptance of rubber mats as bedding in free stalls for dairy cows, provided cow comfort and welfare can be demonstrated using the AssureWel welfare outcome assessment protocols. AGW’s auditors will apply the new standards in the coming months. Thank you again to everyone who contributed to the standards review consultation. Visit animalwelfareapproved.us/standards



IN THE NEWS...

MIKE SUAREZ



GRASSFED DAIRY HEALTH BENEFITS

Cows fed a 100 percent grass and legume-based diet produce nutritionally enhanced milk, according to new research published in the *Food Science and Nutrition* journal.

In a collaborative international project involving the University of Minnesota, Johns Hopkins University, Newcastle University in England, Southern Cross University in Australia and the Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark, researchers found that cows fed a 100 percent grass and legume-based diet produce milk with elevated levels of omega-3 and CLA, providing a healthier balance of fatty acids.

The improved fatty acid profile in grassfed milk and dairy products brings the omega-6/omega-3 ratio to a near 1 to 1, compared to 5.7 to 1 in conventional whole milk.

Omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids are essential human nutrients, yet consuming too much omega-6 and too little omega-3 can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes. Today, Americans consume 10 to 15 grams of omega-6 for every gram of omega-3.

“The near-perfect balance of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids in grassmilk dairy products will help consumers looking for simple, lifestyle options to reduce the risk of cardiovascular and other metabolic diseases,” says co-author Charles Benbrook, a Visiting Scholar at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. The team analyzed over 1,160 samples of whole grassmilk taken over three years from on-farm bulk tanks prior to any processing.

FREE LAND TRANSFER ADVICE

Farmers and land-owners can now affordably access, transfer and conserve farmland, thanks to a new free online resource from the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems at Vermont Law School. The Farmland Access Legal Toolkit is a user-friendly guide for farmers seeking to transition land to another farmer as part of estate planning or for other reasons. The toolkit explains legal arrangements with innovative models of ownership, leasing and estate planning that have worked for other farmers. farmlandaccess.org

RETAIL STAFF TRAINING SUCCESS

Employees at Weaver Street Market in North Carolina learned about the confusing food label landscape—and the benefits of AGW’s food certifications—at a dedicated AGW training day in late February.

Emily Moose, AGW’s Director of Communication and Outreach, was joined by Jeremiah Jones, President of Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association, Sam Suchoff, producer of Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW Lady Edison products and Sarah Blacklin of NC Choices, to present to staff from Weaver Street Market’s three stores. Topics included

a review of common food label terms and claims, and the benefits of third-party, independent certification and production practices.

“Weaver Street Market offers a number of AGW-certified products, and is really walking the walk when it comes to sustainability and transparency in retail,” says Emily Moose. “We were thrilled to be invited to talk about how to best position these products in the market—and encourage product sales. We look forward to more!”

If you are interested in similar in-store training opportunities, contact your Farmer and Market Outreach Coordinator (see page 20).



MARC FIORITO, G9 EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY

GOOD FOOD AWARDS

Four Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW products won top honors at the eighth annual Good Food Awards, held at the historic San Francisco War Memorial in January.

American Pig’s Picante Salami made with certified pork from Hickory Nut Gap Farm in Fairview, NC, and Sweet Sopressata and Spanish Chorizo made by Lady Edison featuring certified pork from the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association won an award in the Charcuterie category, while Green Dirt Farm in Weston, MO, won in the Cheese category for their Prairie Tomme certified sheep’s milk cheese.

This year’s finalists were selected in a blind tasting of 2,057 entries from across the U.S. and also passed a rigorous vetting to confirm they met Good Food Awards standards regarding supply chain transparency, environmentally sound agricultural practices, animal welfare and deep community engagement. Congratulations to all!

goodfoodawards.org

USDA DROPS ORGANIC WELFARE RULE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) officially announced the withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) final rule on March 12.

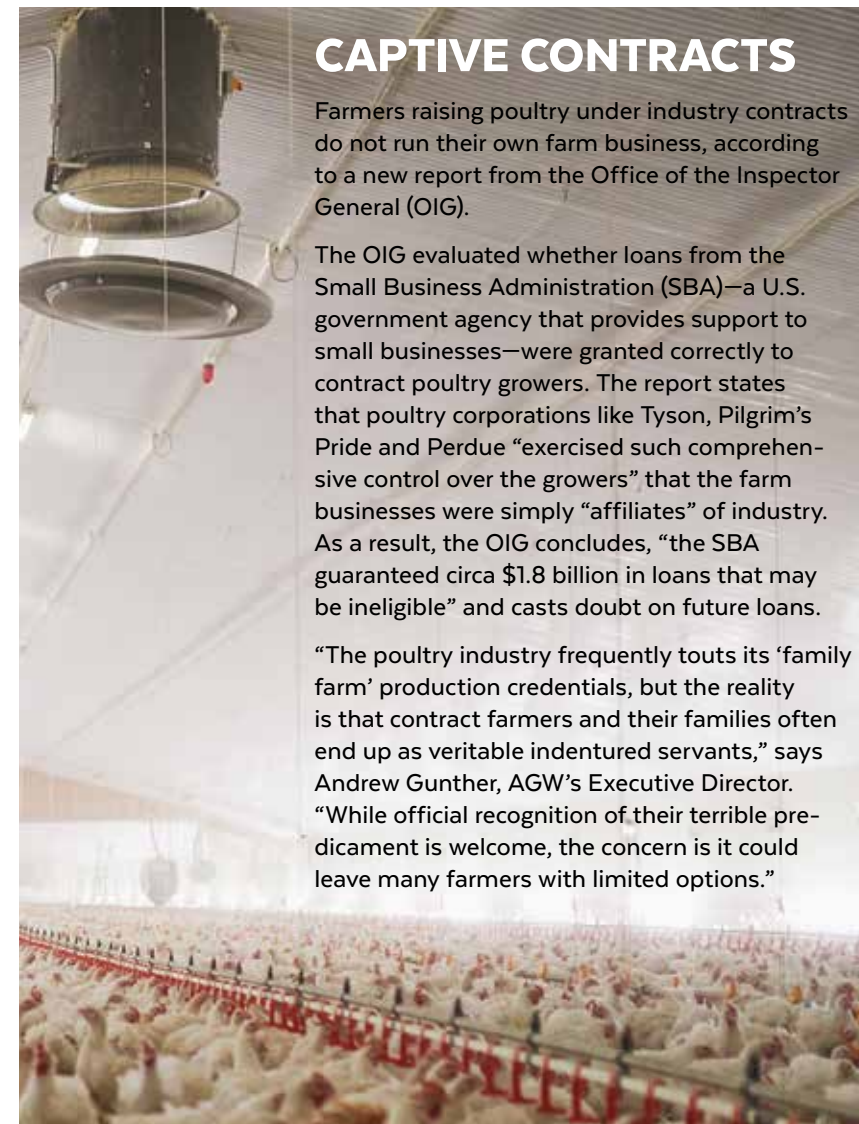
Set to come into force this year, the OLPP was the culmination of a decade of collaboration between organic farmers, retailers and others, and would have introduced (albeit nominal) welfare improvements on certified Organic farms. Yet despite widespread public support, USDA said the OLPP “could have had a negative effect on voluntary participation in the National Organic Program, including real costs for producers and consumers.”

CAPTIVE CONTRACTS

Farmers raising poultry under industry contracts do not run their own farm business, according to a new report from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

The OIG evaluated whether loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA)—a U.S. government agency that provides support to small businesses—were granted correctly to contract poultry growers. The report states that poultry corporations like Tyson, Pilgrim’s Pride and Perdue “exercised such comprehensive control over the growers” that the farm businesses were simply “affiliates” of industry. As a result, the OIG concludes, “the SBA guaranteed circa \$1.8 billion in loans that may be ineligible” and casts doubt on future loans.


“The poultry industry frequently touts its ‘family farm’ production credentials, but the reality is that contract farmers and their families often end up as veritable indentured servants,” says Andrew Gunther, AGW’s Executive Director. “While official recognition of their terrible predicament is welcome, the concern is it could leave many farmers with limited options.”



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Opinion

REALISTIC SOLUTIONS

Can we really expect consumers to shake every farmer's hand, asks Peter Mundy?

Peter Mundy is
Group Writer/Editor for
A Greener World

"Eat meat from people whose hands you can shake and whose ranches you can visit." This was the key take away from a recent Civil Eats OpEd, written by Ariel Greenwood, grazing manager at Freestone Ranch in the San Francisco Bay area.

Greenwood beautifully outlines all the hard work they put in at the ranch to raise their cattle right and protect the local—and global—environment. But at the crux of her argument is a criticism of recent campaigns by some environmental groups to "eat less meat." This messaging not only incorrectly brands all meat the same, she argues, but also misses an opportunity to explain to consumers that there are ways to produce meat that actually benefit the planet.

At AGW, we couldn't agree more. But Greenwood's advice to consumers to "eat meat from people whose hands you can shake and whose ranches you can visit" raises a number of concerns.

Reconnecting farmers and eaters is one of AGW's core goals. But is it realistic to expect every consumer to have the time and ability to visit every farm they eat food from? No. Most Americans are struggling to put food on the table; many work two or more jobs. They are both time and cash poor, and shop accordingly. Over 80 percent of Americans also live in urban areas. Expecting everyone to visit farms (or farmers' markets) is unrealistic and, frankly, comes across as rather elitist. Like it or not, the supermarket is still king—at least for the time being.

Likewise, most farmers and ranchers just aren't in the position to sell direct to consumers. Even if they wanted to (and many don't!), most don't have the urban centers on their doorstep, let alone the skills, time, training, extra staff and capital necessary for success in the direct-sale marketing models. Again, it is simply not a realistic solution.

Second, even if the average consumer could visit the farm, would they really have the necessary expertise to assess the livestock management practices, or what is being done to protect or enhance the environment? Absolutely not. This is not to say that consumers aren't smart—it's just that farming is far more complex than many give it credit for.

Assessing grazing management and farmland biodiversity or identifying the use of hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics, mutilations and long-term confinement is not something that can be accomplished during a family walk around the farm on a summer's day. Agriculture requires as much expertise, critical thinking and knowledge as any other high-level profession: No one would assume they could walk into an operating room or a mechanic's shop and assess the work being done. So why do we assume this of agriculture? Is it because society chronically undervalues the role and expertise of farmers today?

Third, while I have no reason to doubt that Freestone Ranch is being managed how they claim, "sustainable" means very different things to different people. And, as with any business sector, a tiny minority of farmers (and companies marketing their products) will inevitably cut corners or look to make a quick buck by mislabeling the food they produce.

So what is the answer? Knowing your farmer and buying direct is a great thing, but it won't deliver agricultural sustainability at a system level, nor at scale. As a movement, we have to think bigger. Whether selling direct or through retail, the best way for farmers to reflect and protect their sustainability credentials is through third-party certification. It's also the best way for consumers to be sure that a farm's practices really do match their expectations.

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS

KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

Join us in celebrating many of the farmers and ranchers across North America who embark on their 10th year of certification!

From humble beginnings in 2008, Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW is now the leading animal welfare and sustainability label across North America.

A recent report from the influential Hartman Group, a leading food and beverage market research company, reveals the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW label now has the highest impact on consumer purchasing behavior of *any* current food certification label (see page 3). Yet none of this would be possible without the farmers and ranchers who sit at the very heart

of A Greener World. This article is a celebration of the many farmers and ranchers who, in 2018, embark on their 10th year of certification, after first applying back in 2008.

They are among the true pioneers, and we applaud their commitment and dedication to high-welfare, sustainable management, as well as their work to spread the word about the benefits of their certification to consumers and farmers alike. Their continued success demonstrates the growing maturity of the market for sustainable food animal products—and the opportunities.

ALBERT D. JONES FARM

Chinquapin, NC

With over 50 years in the business, Albert “A.D.” Jones is an experienced pastured pig farmer. Like others farmers featured in this article, A.D. first became certified back in 2008 as a member of the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association (NCNHGA).

“Farming has changed a lot since we started. But the market has changed for the better over the last decade, particularly since we joined the NCNHGA,” says A.D. and his wife, Judy. “People want food that is produced more naturally, without GMOs and the like. And more farmers are becoming cognizant of the fact that what you put into hogs will ultimately affect the health of people who eat them. That’s a good thing.”

STUART FAMILY FARM

Bridgewater, CT • stuartfamilyfarm.com

Stuart Family Farm is a fourth-generation farm, specializing in the production of grassfed beef cattle. Bill and Deb Stuart (pictured) and their family raise around 250 Red Angus beef cattle on the 800-acre farm. The farm has been certified since 2008, after the family searched for a trusted farm certification that shared the family’s core values for the high-welfare, sustainable management of farm animals. In 2016, Stuart Family Farm also became the first farm in



Connecticut to be Certified Grassfed by AGW for beef cattle.

The Stuarts sell Certified Grassfed by AGW beef through their retail farm store, and to several well-known retail outlets and local restaurants. “I think consumer demand for food that meets high animal welfare standards has overtaken all other criteria,” Bill says. “At the beginning it was ‘local,’ then it was ‘local and grassfed.’ Now our customers ask about our animal welfare certification and it is at the forefront of our business.”

“The majority of wholesale clients also express to us that their biggest concern when purchasing meat is if the animal was humanely raised and how well the animal was treated on the slaughter end. It is one thing to tell them ourselves, but to have this trusted certification to back it up is huge.”

RARE EARTH FARMS

Raleigh, NC • rareearthfarms.com

Karl Hudson and Mann Mullen own and operate Rare Earth Farms, LLC., a Certified Grassfed by AGW beef cattle and Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW pig operation. They manage around 100 Angus cross cattle and Ossabaw Island pigs, ideally suited for pastured systems.

Karl and Mann originally chose to pursue farm certification back in 2008, gaining Certified Grassfed by AGW status for their cattle in 2015. “Being Certified Grassfed by AGW provides a level of consumer trust that we could not achieve through other programs,” Karl explains. “Not long ago, a woman walked up to me, looked me straight in eye, and said, ‘the only reason I buy from you is because you’re Certified Animal Welfare Approved!’ We always use our logos because people around here know it.”



GRASSROOTS PORK CO.

Beulaville, NC

Jeremiah and Jessica Jones raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW pigs and Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW laying hens.

Jeremiah (above) is also president of the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association (NCNHGA), established in 2007 when a group of hog farmers pooled their resources to build new markets for their pork. In 2009, the NCNHGA made third-party farm certification a requirement for all members to communicate their high-welfare and environmental management practices to customers. Today, NCNHGA farmers collectively manage Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW and Certified Non-GMO by AGW hogs on 4,000 acres, supplying restaurants, regional Whole Foods Markets and retail outlets across North Carolina—and beyond.

“AGW’s certifications offer a way to add value to group marketing efforts,” says Jeremiah. “We can assure potential customers that every NCNHGA pig is raised outdoors on pasture or range without subtherapeutic antibiotics, beta-agonist growth promoters or GMOs. It gives our customers real proof of what they’re buying.”

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS



“Being certified gives us the credibility that our customers demand ... a level of consumer trust we could not achieve through other programs”

Karl Hudson,
Rare Earth Farms



HIGH MEADOWS FARM

Delhi, NY • highmeadowssuffolks.com

Nestled near the Catskill Mountains, High Meadows Farm was the first farm in New York to become certified. Owners John and Laura Hussey have long been devoted to conserving rare and endangered livestock breeds. Working with livestock manager, Ann Van Arsdale, and her co-worker, James Hodges, the Husseys raise registered Tamworth pigs and are a certified source farm for breeding pigs, selling to other farms.

“We started out with our first Tamworths in 1994,” Ann (pictured above) explains. “Today, we have between 15–18 sows at any given time.”

“We sell the piglets from spring through autumn, with a list of regular customers. Most customers use outdoor, sustainable and high-welfare practices. There seems to be more and more people starting up with pigs and doing it in a small, sustainable farm setting,” Ann adds.

BALDWIN FAMILY FARMS

Yanceyville, NC • baldwinbeef.com

Growing up in Durham County, V. Mac Baldwin’s lifelong interest in farming began when he purchased his first calf at just 10 years old. Today, V. Mac and his wife, Peggy, raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW beef cattle at 1,000-acre Baldwin Family Farms, where they have been farming for nearly 40 years.

The Baldwins originally started as cattle breeders, but began raising beef “quite by accident” when they decided to market surplus stock themselves to local customers. Baldwin Family Farms high-quality beef is now available in many area retail outlets—including Kroger stores.

In 2008, the Baldwins first began to notice a growing concern about the high welfare management of farm animals among their customers: “Over recent years we’ve seen a real awakening among consumers. It seems like the public has rediscovered the farmer again.”

“You would not believe how many emails and calls we get regarding how the animals are treated. Our AGW logo is prominent on our packaging, front and back. I tell everybody ‘this is the gold standard for animal welfare and production.’”

GREEN DIRT FARM

Weston, MO • greendirtfarm.com

Sarah Hoffmann and her team raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW dairy sheep outdoors on pasture at Green Dirt Farm, creating award-winning sheep’s milk cheeses and yogurts.

She founded the farm in 2002 and her intense passion for artisanal cheese, animal welfare, sustainability and the wellbeing of her employees led Green Dirt Farm to where it is today.

“We have been steadily growing sales over the past 10 years to match production capacity,” Sarah says. “We’ve seen a lot of changes, mostly in how we sell. We’ve stopped selling at farmers’ markets, as we couldn’t make it economically sustainable, and focused on selling wholesale, online and to distributors.”

“As the only label that guarantees pasture-based management, our Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW label makes us proud. Although consumers are becoming more conscious of how their buying habits drive decisions on farms, only a small proportion actually make their buying decisions based on those values. But our certification really helps us with our wholesale and distribution customers. We hear a lot of feedback that it’s important to have confirmation that livestock are raised humanely.”

DOGWOOD NURSERY FARMS

Maple Hill, NC

Nelson and Mary James raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW pigs outdoors on pasture. Nelson is a third-generation farmer and, remarkably, the 30 acres he and Mary farm have been in Nelson’s family since the 1800s.

Nelson and Mary are truly an example to other farmers, winning the North Carolina Small Farmers of the Year award in 2006 and 2008 for their extensive outreach efforts and promotion of sustainable farming. They also helped launch NC Willing Workers, a 12-member African American cooperative whose goal is to raise awareness of sustainable farming.

Pork from Dogwood Nursery and Farms is sold directly from the farm in Maple Hill. Mary and Nelson are also members of the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association.

“The market for us has really changed for the better over the last 10 years,” Mary and Nelson say. “Before we got involved with Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW and the NCNHGA, we were selling on the open market. Things have improved tremendously. Our certification has helped get more customers, without a doubt. Customers ask more questions about what’s in their food and how it was produced. Our certification is the one thing that stands out!”



“The market has really changed for the better over the last 10 years ... our certification is the one thing that stands out!”

Mary and Nelson James,
Dogwood Nursery
Farms

DOBSON FARM

Magnolia, NC

Fred Dobson was born and raised on a working farm. His father had extensive knowledge about livestock farming and, from a young age, Fred got involved with all aspects of raising animals. Learning through hands-on experience gave Fred the skills, confidence and inspiration to farm himself.

Today, Fred raises Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW pigs outdoors on pasture at Dobson Farm near Magnolia in Duplin County, about 55 miles east of Fayetteville.

Fred is a passionate advocate for pasture-based pig production: “From the start, I have been very particular about my farm practices, especially the safety and welfare of my animals,” he explains, and originally decided to pursue third-party certification for his pigs back in 2008. Fred feels his AGW certification offers customers the assurance that he adheres to the highest animal welfare standards in his farm management and practices—standards that promote the health of animals, humans, and the wider environment.



CLOVER CREEK FARM

Jonesborough, TN

Chris Wilson (pictured above) and family raise Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW sheep and laying hens at Clover Creek Farm, set in the hills of northeast Tennessee. Her extensive farming experience, combined with a keen interest in sustainable agriculture, has made Chris a respected leader in the field. In 1999, Chris was named Conservation Farmer of the Year in Washington County—the only woman to ever receive the title.

“With the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW label, people know how the product was produced, and that sets you apart,” says Chris. “I’m proud of how I farm and I want my customers to recognize that I’ve gone that extra mile.”

“Over the years, the outreach team has been really supportive. Their work to encourage people to buy certified products is great. I’ve had a lot of people who find me on the AGW website and then contact me about my products.”

CELEBRATING
10 YEARS

Selling direct? If you're not using social media yet, you should be, says Stephanie Vanlochem

An online presence is now a necessity for most farming and food businesses. But it's not just about having a website: Social media is a vital part of any communications and marketing strategy—particularly for those selling directly to the consumer.

Why social media?

A basic website will allow customers to easily find you online, but it has its limitations. Customers can visit your website, look at it and leave—and subsequently forget about you. Unless you spend a lot of time updating your website with new content or dynamic features, there's no reason for anyone to keep coming back.

Social media is very different. Social media is an umbrella term for a number of online tools or platforms that allow people to stay in regular touch with each other and share information, like photographs, news or ideas. These platforms are far more dynamic and interactive than a basic website: they are (quite literally) like conversations.

Unlike basic websites, social media platforms allow businesses of all shapes and sizes to communicate directly and continuously with new and existing customers. Customers can choose to 'follow' your business, enabling you to provide them with interesting, up-to-date information about what you are doing or the products and services you offer, as well as reinforcing the values you share. What's more, you can do this for free—at its most basic, the only cost is your time.

The most popular social media platforms include Facebook and Instagram, the focus of this article. But there are many more, such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

230 million Americans regularly use Facebook

Most users access it at least eight times a day

77.5 million Americans use Instagram

GET SOCIAL

Facebook

With 1.32 billion active global users, Facebook is the most widely used social platform—and by a large margin! If you're just starting out, or only want to focus on one social media platform, choose Facebook.

Facebook provides your customers with a detailed, image-led profile of your business (with full contact details) and a 'timeline' to upload (or post) regular content that will inform, educate and entertain followers. You can easily create and upload content, such as where to buy your products or add farm photos, from a phone app, tablet or computer at any time. Facebook also offers the potential to create highly specific and localized advertisements to fit any budget.

Find out more: facebook.com/business/learn/set-up-facebook-page

Instagram

Instagram is another very popular social media platform, designed specifically for sharing visual content. Photos of farm life scenes, animals and your products are ideal for this platform. Like Facebook, you can easily upload content using a smart phone, tablet or computer. Interestingly, Instagram users also tend to be younger than Facebook users. That can be a good thing, because many younger people are highly invested in seeking out sustainable products.

Find out more: help.instagram.com

What to post

It sounds crazy, but almost everything you do on a day-to-day basis will be of interest to your customers. Customers don't just want to buy your products: they want to learn about life on your farm; they want to feel part of it all.

Spend a few minutes listing the basic daily management tasks you do, as well as notable seasonal events like lambing or farrowing or letting cows out after winter. You'll be amazed at the range of things you do! Posting photos of simple acts like feeding cattle, cutting and loading hay, cleaning and packing eggs, fixing the tractor or even updating farm records for your upcoming audit (!) will prove fascinating, while shots of your family or team will bring a human element to your social media pages. Remember to briefly explain what's going on in the photos to inspire, educate and inform—and encourage conversation.

What makes your farm stand out among others? Customers want to know why supporting you is better for the environment, for animals and for their health. So regularly highlight your high-welfare, sustainable farming practices and promote your AGW certification. You don't have to put down other farms to be proud of what you do. Explain why AGW certification matters and what's involved. Make sure your AGW logos are displayed prominently on products and social media pages.

Finally, you want social media to help sell your products, but don't overdo it. Remind people once a week where they can buy your products, dates of upcoming farmers' markets or any special offers and so on. Promote and 'tag' stores that stock your products on social media—and make sure you follow their social media pages, too.

Create your narrative

Social media is also about setting a 'narrative' for your business and building a sense of community among followers. Sharing information from other (credible) sources will help reinforce the values you and your customers share. Take time out to look at Facebook posts from other farms, businesses and organizations, such as A Greener World, and share their posts—they will usually reciprocate.

Look out for interesting news articles that support what you are doing, such as positive media about the benefits of pasture-based farming. However, try to avoid purveyors of 'fake' news. Reports that make sensationalist or unsubstantiated claims are best avoided, as they may undermine your credibility among customers. Similarly, you should consider setting up separate personal and farm social media accounts to avoid potential problems.

As often happens with new technology, ethical and regulatory frameworks have struggled to incorporate social media. Free services typically

Best practice

Be consistent: Post at least 3–4 times a week. Check for customer interactions at least twice a day—and reply.

Positive image: Use high quality photos or videos. Modern camera phones are all you need to take a good photo. Include a brief explanation, where appropriate.

Vary content: Posts with a visual component get more engagement. But you can also share interesting articles or reports that highlight and support your values.

Don't oversell: Limit hard sales to ¼ of posts. Focus on education, conversation and engagement. Sales will follow.

monetize their product by selling ads and/or personal data, so it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with privacy and advertising policies.

Be committed

Social media is about commitment. Unless you make the commitment to maintain your social media platform(s), you won't see results—and you could end up doing more harm than good. Commitment means adding "Find us on Facebook" and social media links to your website, business cards, signage at the farmers' market and any communications you send out (email or mail).

It also means posting to your social media pages consistently. As a minimum, aim for 3–4 posts a week. Pick a responsible person or learn to do it yourself, set a schedule and then stick to it. Start by agreeing on three days a week when you'll post content at a set time, such as a photo or an update about what's going on at the farm. In addition, set aside a minimum of 20 minutes a day (split up throughout the day) to check in and respond to your audience. It sounds like a lot, but it will soon become a habit. In time, you will learn from people's comments what kind of posts and times work best. Remember, social media is about communicating: Neglect your social media pages or ignore your customer's comments and questions at your peril!

Stephanie Vanlochem is a content developer with an education in marketing and new media. Find @cookbycolor on FB/Instagram



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MORE HEALTH LESS DISEASE

In a new series of articles, Jennifer L. Burton explores the world of alternative livestock therapies—and the emergence of a more “integrative” approach to animal health

Simultaneous improvement in welfare, ecological impact and economic viability for food animals requires management that supports all three. Many “alternative” approaches serve these values well. But some don’t—and not every alternative practice is a good fit for every farm. This series of articles seeks to help you choose health care that best suits your goals, values and lifestyle.

Since prehistoric times, we’ve been learning more about how living things function, and medical diagnostics, treatments and ethics continue to evolve worldwide. Many systems of public health and medicine emerged independently, advancing in concert with societal traditions and technologies. Over time, some populations integrated knowledge from abroad, while others continued to develop methods unique to their own values.

Germ theory

Community plays a major role in determining which ideas prevail. In 1843, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis showed that handwashing could prevent deaths following childbirth. But his antagonistic approach did not sit well with his colleagues; they in turn ignored and even sabotaged his findings. Semmelweis was ridiculed, but a few years after he died Pasteur published evidence that many diseases are caused by microorganisms (“germ theory”), and handwashing promptly became standard practice.

As germ theory gained credence, many physicians continued to support alternate or complementary views. For example, Drs. Antoine Béchamp and Max Joseph Pettenkofer suggested that an individual’s health status and environment were as important as the germs themselves. In this case, public health outcomes decided the contest: a cholera epidemic was stopped by water treatment, which Pettenkofer had previously opposed, and his theories were dismissed.

Modern medicine: art and science

Today, medical practice is regarded as both art and science. Many physicians throughout history used careful observation, testing and measurement to identify predictable patterns. From this scientific approach emerged some



ECHINACEA

Used orally to bolster immune function during times of stress or increased disease risk

Toxicity risk
Minimum

Interactions
None reported

Residues
None reported



CALENDULA

Used topically for superficial wounds, minor burns

Toxicity risk
Minimum: watch for irritation or allergic reaction

Interactions
None reported

Residues
None reported

CALENDULA: ANNA1311 | ECHINACEA: VOLOSINA | CATTLE: MIKE SUAREZ

great jewels of western medicine, including diagnostics and emergency care.

A study measuring how white blood cells respond to different doses of a substance provides invaluable information about how that substance affects white blood cells. It doesn’t tell us how its by-products in urine affect soil microbes, what we risk by delaying other treatment, or whether you can safely administer the substance to your sick animal. Whole-system or “ecological” health practice uses good science wherever it is available, and ensures that values are addressed even when science can’t tell us how. Semmelweis’s and Pettenkofer’s stories show that information is not enough; ecological healthcare must care for people, working together with community despite differences.

To consider the entire animal, farm and planet in every health decision is a tall order. The following questions are a good place to start:

- What are the impacts of harvest or manufacture, or of any by-products on pasture or in wastewater?
- What are the effects on the animal being treated, workers and consumers?
- What are the long-term environmental and community impacts?
- What are the consequences of not treating, or of trying something else first?

Some answers will remain unknown. But even acknowledging that fact represents great strides toward ecological healthcare.

Historical traditions, modern use

Medicines can be sorted by their action in the patient, physical form or historical context. The echinacea plant fits into many categories, as it has been used for centuries on three continents. Modern science provides evidence for what users across several medical traditions historically surmised: echinacea modulates immune function. Research has shown that it can increase white blood cell counts in horses and some poultry, and enhance disease-fighting activity of white blood cells in cattle. It increased antibody production in laying hens and improved protection when used with coccidia vaccines. In clinical trials, echinacea

KEY TERMS

Understanding the language of integrative medicine can help you find resources and work with veterinarians. We tend to call mainstream ideas “conventional” and everything else “alternative,” but many veterinarians prefer “integrative”—in other words, using what works, regardless of origin.

These three H’s are commonly confused:

Holistic: considering the whole patient or whole system
Herbal: plant-based; botanical
Homeopathy: a medical system that uses specific highly diluted remedies to treat disease, on the principle “like cures like”

reduced the incidence of piglet scours and mastitis-metritis-agalactia syndrome in sows.

Feeding echinacea continuously to chickens was not beneficial in the above studies, and in recent years practitioners have recommended that it be used at times of increased stress or disease risk, but not continuously. On the few sow farms where echinacea didn’t work, the swine researchers suspect the low-quality feed and poor sanitation were to blame, but those factors were not analyzed in that study. Do you think they matter? Dr. Béchamp probably would.

Similarly, calendula tinctures and ointments have been used to treat minor wounds since at least the 12th century. Laboratory studies have identified anti-inflammatory and antibacterial activities, as well as stimulation of new tissue growth. Some immune cells create free radicals to kill bacteria; calendula’s antioxidants may further speed healing by cleaning up that debris, preventing oxidative damage.

Known as botanicals or herbals, plant-based interventions such as those described above are prominent in many medical systems. Botanical medicines can include whole plant parts, distilled essential oils, extracts in water or oil, or tinctures that also contain alcohol. Although some botanicals are believed to act differently, the effects of many are characterized in the same way as pharmaceuticals, in terms of chemical interactions. Just as two tomatoes can taste very different, plants grown or processed in different ways can have different content. The research described above examined botanicals that were “standardized” by measuring how much of an active substance was present. Many plants contain more than one active substance, and quality and dosing can vary, so work with a veterinary herbalist if possible. If that’s not realistic, ask your veterinarian to advise on dosing.

Jennifer L. Burton, DVM, is a veterinarian and educator with a special interest in the intersection of food animal medicine and public health.

In the next issue: Dr. Burton will discuss risks such as residues and herb-drug interactions, and assessments to ensure timely, appropriate treatment.

A RECORD FOR SUCCESS

Farm records are not just important to prove compliance. They can hold real value for your business, as Anna Heaton explains ...

Whatever animal species you raise, the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW standards will require you maintain a range of different records. Records are often seen as a chore—or even a waste of time. But they're not only important to prove compliance: they hold real value for your farm business and the management of your animals.

What's the point of records?

We're all human and it's easy to forget or misremember details. We've all been in situations where our recollections are different from those of others who were at the same event; and when you manage the same farming cycle year after year, it's easy for all the lambing or calving seasons to blur into one. Equally, we often remember the great things that happen—in life and on the farm—but gloss over the bad. If you're setting targets for your farm business it's near impossible to work out if you're meeting them without records.

The basics may be as simple as recording whether or not a breeding animal is actually producing offspring. But you might also want to know if one breeding male is producing better results than another, whether some meat animals grow better than others, or if one flock is producing more eggs than another. If you're selecting young females to retain as part of your breeding herd or flock, you need to select those that inherit good traits from their parents. By selecting ewe lambs from mothers who always

produce twins, for example, there's a good chance the next generation of breeding animals will be similarly prolific. Selecting animals from lines that show good milk production or resilience to parasites will also help improve performance of your herd or flock. But if you haven't kept any records you might not just miss out on some possible star performers, but you could end up selecting animals that perpetuate problems.

Regularly comparing current and previous records can also help pick up production issues sooner. Are milk yields lower than expected compared to last year? Are meat animals taking longer to get to market weight? The earlier you pick up a potential problem, the easier it usually is to do something about it.

Records can help you perpetuate or improve the better traits in your herd or flock and eliminate the bad traits by recording which animals show these and selecting accordingly. Records can also help you to learn from mistakes—or from innovation. If you do something different you will at least know the result.

What counts as a record?

Any kind of documentation counts as a record. If you have a complex, multi-species farm, you might have invested in specialized computer software to log and track different aspects of your business. If you have a small, single-species business, you might write things down in a

notebook or on a calendar. As long as you can show and explain it to an auditor, both of these options count as a record. If you've never kept records before, a dedicated pocket notebook is a good way to start. Instead of standing in the field thinking, "I must remember that," you can just note it down. The essential things to start with are:

- What you have brought onto the farm and what have you sold—whether individual birds or animals (breeding stock or feeders) or livestock products, such as milk, eggs or wool
- What was born and what was reared
- What got sick, what got treated and what died—and if you know why
- What are you feeding and how much

You might also consider recording more detailed information. For example, two sows might each have reared nine piglets. The first sow reared nine even, well-grown piglets and still looked in good condition; the second reared a more variable litter, including three runts that will take a lot of care or feed to get them to grow into something that can either be bred or sold. The more detail you record, the more informed your decision making will be.

What if I don't keep records?

If you're willing to start keeping records, then the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW program is willing to work with you!

Ideally, you'll have kept farm records before you apply. But, as outlined in our standards, farmers and ranchers who join the program have 12 months from their initial audit to get all the required plans and records in place. At your initial audit, we'll let you know what records and plans you'll need to comply with the standards. If you commit to ensuring any missing records or plans are in place by your next audit, you can be put forward for approval (assuming there aren't any other compliance issues that need to be resolved first). In other words, an absence of farm records is *not* a reason for your initial certification to be denied. But please note: We take your commitment to provide records and plans for subsequent audits extremely seriously. Failure to have them in place can lead to suspension or, in extreme cases, termination from the program.

A useful tool

In summary, if you already keep records (or are willing to start), we'd welcome your application to the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW program. Record keeping should not add greatly to your days' work and, once integrated in your management, will help with future decision making, improving farm productivity—and profits.

Anna Heaton is Lead Technical Advisor with A Greener World

Is certification right for you?

Given the choice, if you had to spend an afternoon updating your farm records or to hand-fork half a ton of stinking manure out of a poorly designed chicken shed, and you immediately reach for the pitchfork, you might want to rethink whether farm certification is right for you.

Joking aside, records are not only of use to your farm business, but form an integral part of any credible farm certification program.

AGW's auditors visit each certified farm at least once a year. During that visit they have to assess everything you've done since the last audit against our standards. While they will spend a large part of the audit looking at your livestock and pastures, some things can only be evaluated by reviewing your farm records.

No farm records and unwilling to develop and maintain them? Then certification may not be a good fit for you.



Selecting the right goat breed for the farm environment is a key element in achieving sustainable production. This relates not only to its genetic ability to produce food of the desired type, quality and quantity (milk, meat, fiber) under prevailing conditions, but whether the animal can flourish within its natural environment without undue reliance on excessive inputs or management. This includes the breeds’ ability to thrive in the climatic conditions where it is farmed, as well as the potential environmental stresses associated with the local terrain, seasonal fluctuations in feed supply and water, inherent disease risk factors and potential for predators.

Goat breeds can be broadly classified into dairy, meat or fiber breeds. (For a more comprehensive online list, search for ‘Oklahoma State University Goat Breeds’.) However, studies show there is a lack of genetic structure among goat breeds compared to other domestic farmed species, meaning that many main goat breeds are sufficiently flexible to be productive across a range of environments. The downside is that there can be a lot of variation within breeds, meaning a goat from a supposedly good dairy breed might not actually be a good milk producer.

Given that goats commonly have multiple births, combined with a relatively short generation interval and good heritability estimates for

COMMON BREEDS
Dairy: Alpine, LaMancha, Nigerian Dwarf, Nubian, Oberhasli, Saanen, Sable, Toggenburg
Meat: Boer, Genemaster, Kiko, Kinder, Myotonic, Pygmy, Savanna, Spanish, Tennessee Meat Goat, TexMaster
Fiber: Angora, Cashmere, Pygora

production and conformation traits, there are good opportunities for genetic improvements. Most large-scale breeding programs have focused on production traits (milk, protein and fat content; conformation), physical characteristics associated with breed type (stature, rump angle, udder shape/teat position), with some consideration of adaptation to the local environmental conditions and availability of feed resources. In some countries, consideration is increasingly given to functional traits that influence health and welfare, such as somatic cell counts, as well as achieving sustainability through selection for more efficient use of natural browsing and grazing.

Research also suggests some goat breeds are more resistant or resilient to gastro-intestinal parasites, and the impact of parasite burden on milk production is greater among breeds selected for yield, compared with those considered rustic or indigenous. However, it is unclear whether tolerance is associated with a genetic resistance or differences in production potential, as the level of milk production in dairy goats may influence the resistance and/or resilience to parasitism.

Article adapted from Farm Health Online. For more information about practical, science-based advice on high-welfare livestock management, visit farmhealthonline.com

Certification news

AUDIT QUESTIONS

Tim Holmes explains our farm audit scheduling policies

We get a lot of questions about scheduling farm audits. I thought it would be useful to review the most common queries we receive, and explain our overall goals and policies.

Why is my first audit delayed?

We audit farms and ranches across the U.S. and Canada. It’s a huge geographical area, which can present significant logistical challenges. We aim to contact every farm within seven days of receiving an application so we can start the screening process, and assign an auditor. As a not-for-profit organization, we do our best to minimize the significant costs of auditing by ‘bundling’ several audits together by location. Auditing an individual farm can cost three times as much as those we have combined as an audit bundle, so if we don’t have any farms awaiting audit in your location, we might ask you to wait a short period until we can bundle more audits. However, we will assign an individual audit if the wait is deemed too excessive.

Why does my audit date change every year?

Your initial audit date generally reflects the time of year you applied to the program. But if we did not rotate the month the audit takes place, we would only ever see your farm at the same time of year.

Rotating your farm audit allows us to audit your farm throughout different seasons and workloads of the year. It is important to audit farms during the different seasons to understand how management meets the standards at different times of year. This gives us a true picture of the farm’s actual operation.

We’re calving: Can I rearrange the audit date?

At some point, your audit will happen during a

busy period, such as planting or birthing season. We understand that farmers are very busy and your time can be limited, but we cannot rearrange your audit because you are busy. It is absolutely essential for us to see how a farm manages these busy periods, as the farm must maintain compliance with the standards during peak times, as well as less stressful times.

Our professional auditor team will do their best to make the process as smooth as possible and only take up the minimum amount of time necessary to complete an audit. But it’s inevitably more complicated and time-consuming to audit a farm that is *not* familiar with the standards for their species or that does not have all the documentation required. Planning ahead and having all your records and plans up to date and all feed tags and other materials ready for the audit will save everyone a lot of time.

Why is the auditor contacting me so far in advance?

We assign farms to auditors at least two months ahead of the audit so they can contact each farmer in the bundle and arrange audit dates that work best for everyone. It also gives them the chance to ask you if you’ve made any significant changes since the last audit. For example, you might want to add new species or include new production sites. With a bit of notice, we can put all the paperwork in place before the audit and ensure we have allocated sufficient time to complete all necessary tasks. It also means we can book travel in advance, minimizing costs—and allowing us to certify more farms!

Tim Holmes is Director of Compliance with A Greener World

A GREENER WORLD

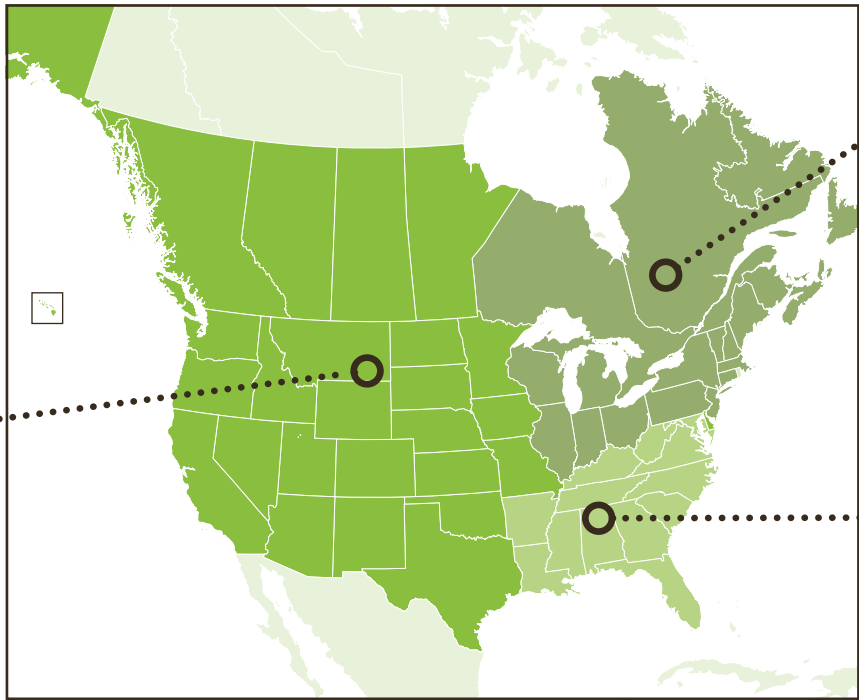
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Promoting A Greener World

AGW is proud to offer a new range of low cost branded promotional materials to help raise awareness of your certification and better communicate the wider benefits of your farming practices. Every purchase also supports our work to educate and inform consumers—and helps keep your certifications affordable!

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TAKING PICTURES OF YOUR FARM

Good quality photos are increasingly important for promoting businesses— especially farms and ranches that sell direct. But taking good quality shots, particularly of animals, is far from easy!

Written with AGW's go-to photographer, Mike Suarez of Gorilla Byte Media, AGW's guide, *Taking Pictures of Your Farm*, will help you take better photographs on your farm or ranch for use in social media and other promotional materials.

Download a free copy at agreenerworld.org/library



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- 1,000 stickers per roll
- Shipping fee \$2 a roll first class with USPS

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Meet the farmer

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Fouch Farms is a family run operation near Yosemite National Park, managed by Jesse and Hannah Fouch and their four kids: Jensen (9), Gus (7), Poppy (5) and Henry (2). Born and raised in Mariposa, they are descendants of early pioneers and run cattle on land that has been in the family since the 1850s.

Can you give a short farming history?

We began farming in 2003, after getting married and moving back to our hometown after college. Our primary motivation was raising healthy food for our family and, secondarily, to build a successful business and buy our own ranch. We met Emily, AGW's Director of Communications and Outreach, at a Niche Meat Marketing conference in 2008. We felt the certification matched our values and would help market our products. I think we were among the first 50 farms to become certified with the program!

Describe a typical day in your life

We wake at 5–6 a.m. and Hannah goes to work as a nurse. Jesse and the kids homeschool until around 11 a.m., when they head out to do the daily chores, like feeding animals, milking, irrigation, moving and checking the cows, and so on. At around 1 p.m., we switch when Hannah comes home, and Jesse leaves for work as a State Trooper. The afternoon is spent homeschooling and doing projects around the farm. On weekends, we tackle bigger projects like moving cattle from field to field, setting up electric fencing and making general improvements to the farm. We take time off our day jobs during the busy seasons in the spring and fall to get bigger projects done, like putting up hay and planting. We try to travel often during slower seasons.

What do you love most about what you do?

Being able to eat the food we produce and watching our kids grow up on a farm. They already have such an uncommon and flexible outlook on life, even at a young age.

What's the main benefit of being certified?

It easily conveys our values and helps us stand out from other producers.

Who are your customers?

We direct market all our products through our email list, via a newsletter. A large portion of our customer base are Weston A. Price Foundation members who value our production practices and believe in supporting local farms.

What is the biggest threat to the sustainable farming movement?

Government regulations that favor large agribusiness and diminish transparency of the food system.

Any advice you have to offer beginning farmers?

Just get started any way possible. Start small and add on as opportunities become available. Seek mentors and then just get out and work hard!

What's your vision for the future?

Being an example of good stewardship and animal welfare by helping as many people as possible on their journey.

What keeps you awake at night?

The guardian dogs barking at coyotes.

What single thing would most improve your life?

Mastering the balance between contentment and ambition.



COURTESY FOUCH FARMS (x2)

AT A GLANCE

Farm: Fouch Farms, Mariposa, CA

Certification/date: Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW for beef cattle since 2009, Certified Grassfed by AGW beef cattle since 2016

Size: 720 acres rangeland, 54 acres hay/crops

Soil type: Sandy loam

Altitude: 1,500–3,500 ft

Annual rainfall: 30 inches

Enterprises: 100 White Park and Dexter cattle.



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