

Forage For Thought

The Southwest Grassfed Livestock Alliance (SWGLA)

Spring 2008

Strengthening the Bond Between Good Stewardship and Healthy Food

You're Invited!

- Who:** All SWGLA members
What: **SWGLA Annual Meeting** and Local Food Festival
When: **May 16th 9:30-11:30am** (meeting) and noon-3pm (festival)
Where: **Albuquerque:** The Historic Gutierrez-Hubbell House and Demonstration Farm, at 6029 Isleta Blvd SW, just 3 miles south of Rio Bravo.



SWGLA is pleased to announce that this year, **Animal Pordomingo**, also known as "The Grassfed Guru" from Argentina, will be speaking at the SWGLA Annual Membership Meeting. about "The Do's and Don'ts of Grassfed Beef." This will also be a great chance to network with other SWGLA members and producers – or get involved as a volunteer, advisor, peer mentor or Board of Directors member.

Are you passionate about clean, healthy locally-produced meat? Whether you are a producer or consumer or both, there are opportunities for you to get involved in the vibrant "relocalization" process



Keelin Faulkner, Soaring Eagle Ranch, Los Ojos, NM

taking place throughout the Southwest and beyond. For more information, click on **Events** at www.grassfedlivestock.org or contact SWGLA Director, Laurie Bower at (505) 231-3467, info@grassfedlivestock.org.

The SWGLA Annual Meeting is open to all current SWGLA members. New members may join at the door for \$25.



Spring to your feet! This little guy greets the day at Pino Creek Ranch in Newkirk, NM.

Southwest Grassfed Livestock Alliance 1210 Luisa St. Suite 10 Santa Fe, NM 87505
 Office: 505.231.3467 Fax: 888.825.0773 Website: www.grassfedlivestock.org

Message from the President

SWGLA must be doing something right; - the membership in general and the number of producers in particular are growing at a healthy pace. It seems that the current economic challenges are helping people focus on real values, like healthy food and sustainable agriculture. The Beef summit last November in Albuquerque with participants from all areas of the industry has also proven that the various niche marketers can work hand in hand with the "traditional, mainstream industry" for the better of all. It will be interesting to see if a state wide branding program is sustainable. SWGLA will sure do its part in the process.

Hard economic times are nothing new to folks in the agricultural industry. One way they have traditionally helped themselves to overcome hardship, has been to band together and form buying cooperatives, small and large scale. That concept has also entered into the consumer side of the food industry. More and more "buying clubs" or "consumer groups" pop up and help their members create bargaining leverage and volume discounts. Some groups of people use the expertise of different members to buy specialty products direct from producers, i.e. somebody knows the honey industry, another one has contacts to produce farmers and someone can help with the meat industry.

I'd like to propose a new project for SWGLA starting this year. We should try to facilitate the creation of 100 buying clubs throughout the southwest ranging from three to 20 members. Our alliance can work as a clearing station to connect folks interested in a buying club to each other. I'm sure, that a lot of our members can help in the organization and give tips to avoid pitfalls like money and product distribution and so on.

Please let either Laurie Bower or me know what your thoughts on this are and if you'd like to get involved as members of a buying club or support staff in SWGLA.

Organized consumers not only benefit from better products and prices, they also build a better relationship with producers, which in turn help every one of our producers.

Unfortunately we don't have access to the money printing machines in Washington DC, so I guess we're on our own to better our lives. Let me know what you and I can do.

Down here in East Central New Mexico we are one day closer to the next rain, may it come in the right amount and time for every one of you.

I look forward to greeting you at the annual Meeting in Albuquerque on May 16th.

Yours truly, Martin Honegger

WELCOME NEW SWGLA PRODUCERS!!!

SWGLA is pleased to welcome the following new producers for 2009. For a complete list of producers, click on "Where to Buy" at www.grassfedlivestock.org.

NEW MEXICO:

Cerro de Taos Grazing Association

Tony Benson 575-770-8198

benson@newmex.com

Full Circle Ranch: Robert and Nancy Hall, Newkirk 575-868-1711

nanbobhall@wildblue.net

JT Land & Cattle: Jim and Carol Thorp Newkirk 575-868-4686

Laughing Sheep Farms: Sally Canning Lincoln 505-653-4041

laughingsheep@pvt.net

www.laughingsheepfarms.com

Mesteno Draw Ranch: Joan Bybee Mountainair 505-847-0137

jbybee@unm.edu

Rainbow Ranch: Sunny and Kelly Hill Folsom rainbowranch@bacavalley.com

Rancho Posada: Roger Friedman, Pecos

ARIZONA:

Double Check Ranch: Paul, Eric & Jean Schwennesen, Winkleman (520) 357-6515

www.doublecheckranch.com

Gasho Land & Cattle Company: David and Sonia Gasho Pearce 520-826-0009

bluegrama@yahoo.com

Ox Ranch: John Murphy, Phoenix

johnm@murphyventures.com

Santa Lucia Ranch: Jon & Peggy Rowley Amado

peggy.rowley@gmail.com

COLORADO:

Megan Philips Mesa

nerpa@earthlink.net

Mission Statement: "SWGLA is an alliance of producers, land managers, conservationists and researchers that promotes and markets grass-fed livestock products through applied research, educations and cooperation in order to improve human, ecological, social and animal health."



Check out SWGLA's new website and domain name at
[www.grassfedlivestock.org!!!](http://www.grassfedlivestock.org)



SWGLA is pleased to announce an all-new and improved website. For all of you "citizen eaters," You'll find info on all our fabulous producers in NM, AZ, UT and CO, including a map search, information on the benefits of grassfed, and back issues of SWGLA's "Forage for Thought" newsletter. Farmers and Ranchers will find an updated EVENTS calendar and other helpful information.

Our newest addition is a CLASSIFIED ADS section, (link in upper left of home page) which is FREE and open to all members to post items that are farm & ranch related. Send your submissions to classifieds@grassfedlivestock.org



Please visit the site as often as you can—this will also help us "gain momentum" and attract more hits on the web!

Many thanks to SWGLA board member and web-woman extraordinaire, Mimi Sidwell for her hard work in creating the site—and to board president Martin Honegger for his consistent feedback and assistance!



Left: newborn calf at the JX Ranch in Tucumcari, NM

Right: Welcome sign at the James Ranch, Durango, CO.

Livestock Growers from the Four Corner States Converge in Durango

By Laurie Bower, Director

From April 6-8th, a diverse collection of farmers, ranchers, food activists, funders and policy specialists convened in Durango for at the Southwest Marketing Network Conference. SWGLA co-facilitated the livestock track, and participated in a variety of additional forums and exchange groups. Success stories ran the gamut—from the huge Midwest farmer coop formed by Diana Endicott of **Good Natured Family Farms**, to the smaller, yet equally story of Dale Dexter's **Homestead Meats;** a cooperative of six ranchers in Paonia & Delta, CO who bought their own processing facility and store. Next to all the great local food, my favorite part of the conference was the tour of the **James Ranch** (longtime SWGLA member/producers) where we saw beauty, innovation, economic viability, environmental preservation and family succession planning all in one place! It was great to connect with the Dine ranchers and all the other determined, innovative individuals from the four corner states!



In need of a workshop or tasting in your area to help promote grass-fed livestock or help ranchers get started providing grass-fed livestock? Give us a call we are here to help you! SWGLA 505.231.3467 or visit our website at www.grassfedlivestock.org



MEMBERS' VOICE

*By Sally Canning, new SWGLA Producer
Laughing Sheep Farm, Carizozzo, NM*

Thirty one years ago my irrigated farm in Lincoln, NM was raising sheep. Coming from a fourth generation wool grower I found sheep a very good animal for a woman to raise. I don't need a chute or pens or ropes or branding equipment. Sheep were ideal. I raised most my lambs and sold them to the feed lots. There really was not a market for lambs but I did find one buyer. I typically got a lot less for my lambs than San Angelo but we didn't have to go far to ship. My flock gained in numbers to around 300. I made a living along with a full time job.

During 1995-97 the climate got so dry I couldn't raise any grass and had to sell most of my sheep. The morning we sent the last load of lambs to the buyer I counted 22 sheep left and there wasn't enough grass to feed them. That's when I decided to go into the choice cut meat business. I had to get more for my lambs. I built a small outlet on the farm and started selling lamb in a package. I kept them on grass because I didn't have the money to buy grains. I just sold the best of what I could raise. The demand was great and the people loved grass fed meat. And if you know sheep, staying away from grains made my job easy.

People continually told me how great the lamb was and, "Do you have any beef". For years I said no. The secret to a successful agritourism business is you have to listen to what the customer wants. We now raise beef, buffalo, pigs, chickens, turkeys, eggs. The list goes on. We put in a large garden to complement the meats. We now have a large vegetable farm, with tomatoes as the main crop.

In the early stages of bringing people to the farm to buy our customers made it clear that they were not sure what grassfed was. One day we fired up a grill and offered free meat to taste to the customers. We're now a complete restaurant seating 100. We listened to the customer.

There were two motives for me in putting my farm on this trek. Most little farms folded during the drought. Gave up. Quit. My father never quit and I wasn't going to either. I decided that the traditional way of farming and ranching wasn't going to work any more and I was going to have to find new markets and 2. MAKE new markets. The other reason was I wanted my grandchildren to have the same opportunity I had and that is to grow up on a working farm or ranch. It breeds success and we're there today thanks to God blessings.

Perfect Wife By Peggy Godfrey



George and I been thinkin'
'Bout tryin' to find a wife
A sweet and gentle martyr
Who'd like the ranchin' life.
Ya know, someone to stay at home
To mop the floors and dust
Tidy up around the house
And never show disgust.
Not the horse-back ridin' sort
But one who'd stay indoors
Whose interests won't emerge until
She's done with all the chores.
We'd have fresh coffee in the pot
She'd bake us cookies and pies
Wash the dishes, answer the phone
And swat the dad-burned flies.
She'd write the checks to pay the bills
And file the ranch receipts
Store away our winter clothes
Occasionally change the sheets.
She'd wash and dry and fold our clothes
Mend the ones with holes
Disagree—POLITELY
Then comply with all our goals.
Supposin' she gets uppity
We'll holler, pout, and whine.
Guilt will work her over
Shame her back in line.
Her schedule would revolve on ours
So she can run to town—
Leave us warm lunch on the stove—
When machinery breaks down.
When we're sortin' cattle
In a typical short-handed bind
She'd know which pairs to separate
By simply reading my mind.
We'd always be stocked with groceries
Have shelves of home-canned food
She'd freeze fresh fruit in season
Be tired, never rude.

Peggy Godfrey currently raises sheep in Moffat, CO. Find more of her fabulous poetry at www.cowboypoetry.com

The “Lowdown” on labels

Confused about all the different labels? Here is a rundown of labels, standards and certification programs – what they mean and what they *don't* mean.

Grassfed: The basic concept behind grassfed meat production is to work with nature’s inherent intelligence by allowing cattle and other ruminant animals to consume their naturally-intended diets of grasses and other forage. This natural diet is appropriate to the digestive system of ruminants and thus, produces a healthier animal. Grassfed meat has been found to be leaner (lower in fat and calories) than it’s “conventional” grain-fed counterpart and has also shown higher levels of Omega 3, Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA), and other important vitamins and nutrients. Most proponents agree that the animals should spend the majority of or all of its life, in an open pasture and that the animals should not be administered antibiotics or hormones.

“Finishing”: This term applies to the animal’s diet during the final 3-6 months prior to harvest. “Grass-finished” means the animal was finished on grass. “Grain-finished” means the animal was finished on grain.

***USDA Grass-fed:** According to the USDA standards set, the animal must be fed mothers milk, grass, forage for 100% of its life, with “continuous access to pasture during the growing season”. No feeding of grain is allowed. The animals have access to the outdoors and are able to engage in natural behaviors, such as grazing. However, no information on stocking density, the frequency or duration of how much outdoor access must be provided, nor the quality of the land accessible to the animals is given. Producers must submit affidavits to the USDA that support their animal production claims in order to receive approval for these labels. Critics are concerned that this definition still allows for confined feeding and use of antibiotics or hormones, and lacks adequate provisions for enforcement.

***American Grassfed Association (AGA) Certified Grass-fed:** This is a certified label that includes third-party verification and adherence to the AGA’s Grassfed Ruminant Standards, which are similar to the USDA Grassfed standards, except that feedlot/confined feeding for more than 30 days is not allowed. Only specific, approved nutritional supplements are allowed. Requires humane animal welfare, handling, transport and slaughter. No hormones, antibiotics or animal byproducts are allowed.

***USDA Certified Organic** - . Ruminant animals are raised on grass or grain-based feed that does not contain animal by-products and are given “access” to pasture. No antibiotics or growth hormones. The producer must meet USDA organic standards related to certified organic feed, clinical use of antibiotics only, no growth hormones, and access to range or pasture during a large portion of the animal’s life. Does not guarantee a 100% grass diet or humane slaughter. Verified through a third-party audit. Criticism centers on concerns about lax enforcement, with some large-scale producers not providing meaningful access to the outdoors. Proposed changes to Organic Pasture Rules were filed by the USDA in Oct of 2008.

Pasture Raised: Implies that animals were raised in open pasture and not reduced to confined feeding.

***Naturally Raised** A USDA proposed voluntary standard, verified by a third party; the Agricultural Marketing Service. From birth to slaughter, the animal was never administered “growth promotants” (including natural and synthetic hormones) or antibiotics, and was never fed animal byproducts. Vaccines and vitamin & mineral supplements are allowed.

Natural – The USDA’s policy is that all fresh meat is natural, and it can’t contain any artificial flavors, colorings, or preservatives. While it is often implied that the animal was not treated with antibiotics or growth hormones, it is not guaranteed. This term does not indicate how the animal was raised, what it was fed or how it was slaughtered.

***Animal Welfare Approved.** This new seal comes from the nonprofit Animal Welfare Institute, and its main aim is to support family farms and the humane treatment of animals. Its strict standards—and they do check up on them, once or twice a year—ensures that animals were raised on independent farms and were given seasonal access to the outdoors (even if they are finished on grain feed), as well as an appropriate diet without routine antibiotics or hormones. It also emphasizes humane treatment during all life stages, including transport and slaughter.

Other humane-treatment labels include:

***American Humane Certified** (American Humane Association)

***Certified Humane Raised & Handled** (Humane Farm Animal Care): The animals must be kept in conditions which allow for exercise and freedom of movement. As such, crates, cages, and tethers are prohibited. Outdoor access is not required. Stocking densities are specified to ensure animals are not overcrowded, and animals must be provided with bedding materials. Hormone and non-therapeutic antibiotic use is prohibited. Compliance is verified through third-party auditing. *(continued on page 6)*

Thank You to Our Supporters: Many thanks to the following organizations for their contributions to SWGLA: **Western Risk Management Education, The New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency, Farm to Table, The Southwest Marketing Network, The Quivira Coalition, and our Private Donors.**

The "Lowdown" on labels *(continued from p.5)*

SWGLA

Board Members

President

Martin Honegger
pcr@plateautel.net

Vice President

Cheryl Goodloe
sralt@hotmail.com

Secretary

Mark Winne
win5m@aol.com

Treasurer

Walt Marshall
cbhecc@aol.com

Shane Faulkner

ser@zianet..com

Nancy Ranney

Ranneyranch
@gmail.com

Reese Woodling

Nrwoodling
@comcast.net

Tawnya Laveta

tlaveta@yahoo.com

Mimi Sidwell

sidwell
@jxranch.com

Director

Laurie Bower
info@swgla.org
505-231-3467

SWGLA

Suite 10

1210 Louisa Street
Santa Fe, NM
87505

Phone 505.231.3467
Fax 888.825.0773

Visit us at

**www.grassfed
livestock.org**

***Free-Farmed*:** The animals must be kept in conditions which allow for exercise and freedom of movement. As such, crates, cages, and tethers are prohibited. Outdoor access is not required. Stocking densities are specified to ensure animals are not overcrowded, and animals must be provided with bedding materials. Hormone and non-therapeutic antibiotic use is prohibited. Compliance is verified through third-party auditing. Free-Farmed is a program of [American Humane](#).

***Free Range.** This USDA term applies only to poultry (and only means they were given "access" to the outdoors).

Cage-Free: As birds raised for meat, unlike those raised for eggs, are rarely caged prior to transport, this label on poultry products has virtually no relevance to animal welfare. However, the label is helpful when found on egg cartons, as most egg-laying hens are kept in severely restrictive cages prohibiting most natural behaviors, including spreading their wings.

Vegetarian-Fed: These animals are given a more natural feed than that received by most factory-farmed animals, but this claim does not have significant relevance to the animals' living conditions.

No Hormones/No Antibiotics. The USDA allows this label for growers who provide documentation, but they don't check up on the claims. "Hormone free" and "antibiotic free" are not USDA approved designations and so are meaningless. All meat contains certain levels of natural hormones.

No label: Most likely, the absence of a label means animals are raised in factory farm conditions that significantly reduce their welfare.

Ultimately, your best bet, which circumvents the labeling confusion altogether, is to get in touch with a local farmer who can verify that the products are raised on pasture, without antibiotics and pesticides. By going straight to the source, you're likely getting the absolute best meat there is, USDA-certified or not.

* programs with specific guidelines or standards (whereas the remaining claims are only labels.)

Tips for Cooking Grass Fed Beef

Bring your grass fed meat to room temperature before cooking. Never use a microwave to thaw your grass fed beef. Either thaw your beef in the refrigerator or for quick thawing place your vacuum sealed package in water for a few minutes.

Always pre-heat your oven, pan or grill before cooking grass fed beef.

Don't overcook it! This beef is made for rare to medium rare cooking. If you like well done beef, then cook at very low temperatures in a sauce to add moisture. Due to high protein and low fat levels, the beef will usually require 30% less cooking time and will continue to cook when removed from heat. So, remove the beef from your heat source 10 degrees before it reaches the desired temperature. If using an oven, lower the temp by 50 degrees from your usual recipe. Use a meat thermometer if possible, checking steaks from the side.

Keep it tender and juicy by coating with a light oil for flavor enhancement and easy browning. The oil will, also, prevent drying and sticking. You may also want to consider marinating your beef beforehand, using slightly less marinade than you would for grain-fed beef. **When grilling**, sear the meat quickly over a high heat on each side to seal in its natural juices, then reduce the heat to a medium or low to finish cooking. Also, baste to add moisture throughout the grilling process. Never use a fork to turn your beef . . . precious juices will be lost. Always use tongs **When roasting**, sear the beef first to lock in the juices. Use moisture from sauces to add to the tenderness when cooking your roast. **When preparing hamburgers on the grill**, use caramelized onions, olives or roasted peppers to add low fat moisture to the meat while cooking. We add zero fat to our burgers (they are 85% to 90% lean) . . . so some moisture is needed to compensate for the lack of fat.

Let it rest! Let the beef sit covered and in a warm place for 8 to 10 minutes after removing from heat to let the juices redistribute.



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 16 & 17: Women in Agriculture Leadership Conference Ruidoso, Contact Shacey Sullivan, 505-884-1048, shacey.sullivan@farmcreditnm.com or Caren Cowan, 505-247-0584, nmcga@nmaagriculture.org

April 18 and 19: Guy Glosson Low Stress Cattle Handling Clinic. Taos, Blackstone Ranch Contact John Adams, Livestock Manager, Blackstone Ranch 575-779-3105 or johnabsr@newmex.com.

April 24 and 25: Rangeland Health and Planned Grazing Workshop with Kirk Gadzia, Taos. This workshop is FREE! You may register online at www.quiviracoalition.org under Workshops or by contacting Catherine at 505-820-2544 ext. 2# or by e-mail to: cbaca@quiviracoalition.org .

May 16th: SWGLA ANNUAL MEETING (all members invited!) 9:30am-11:30 am (with talk by **Anibal Pordomingo**), followed by **Local Food Festival**, Albuquerque, MRCOG noon-3pm SWGLA booth and grassfed meat tasting, with "celebrity" chefs at The Historic Guitierrez-Hubbell House and Demonstration Farm <http://www.mrcog-nm.gov/content/view/298/278/>

June 10th-11th: CHANGING LANDS, CHANGING HANDS: A National Conference on Farm and Ranch Access, Succession, Tenure and Stewardship Denver, CO More details and registration information are available at <http://www.farmlasts.org/conference.htm> . Or contact Kathy Ruhf at kzruh@verizon.net or 413-323-9878.

September 15th – 19th: The Fifth National Small Farm Conference , Springfield, IL. Please visit the [conference website \(http://www.conferences.uiuc.edu/smallfarm\)](http://www.conferences.uiuc.edu/smallfarm) for more information.

November 2009: Quivira Coalition 8th Annual Conference - Celebration of Aldo Leopold NEW DATES! November 4, 5, 6, 2009 - Wednesday thru Friday! www.quiviracoalition.org (505)-820-2544

CONGRATULATIONS JX RANCH!

The New Mexico Section of the Society for Range Management presented outstanding range management and stewardship awards to two New Mexico ranches during the Society's annual meeting January 8 - 10, in Albuquerque. SWGLA producers Tom and Mimi Sidwell of the JX Cattle Company in Tucumcari were one of two recipients for this prestigious award.

The Great Beef Roundup: SWGLA producers give healthy grassfed beef to New Mexico Food Bank:

Over the holidays, families in need in northern New Mexico received something they don't usually get—good healthy grassfed local beef! Thanks to SWGLA producers Pecos Valley Grassfed Beef, The Ranney Ranch and Mark Winne and Pam Roy for their generous contributions!

What's Cooking?



Cooking "The Ultimate Burger"

For safety, ground beef should be kept refrigerated until just before cooking and the burgers should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 160F.

The Grill: Be sure that the grill is hot - if you can hold your hand 5 inches above the grill rack for 3 to 5 seconds, but no longer, it's hot enough. Also make sure the grate is clean to prevent sticking, it's okay to brush on a little oil before cooking as a preventive measure.

The Patty: The ideal patty is 6 ounces of raw meat (ideally, ground chuck), shaped into a 4 1/2-inch circle, 3/4-inch thick on the edges and 1/2-inch thick in

the center. To do this, simply form the burger, then gently press in the center on one side to form a small depression. These patties will cook evenly, and they will not end up puffy and round.

Cooking: Burgers should be grilled or fried over medium-high heat for a nice crusty exterior and a juicy interior. Leave the grill uncovered while the burgers cook. Six-ounce burgers do not require much cooking time -- 2 minutes and 30 seconds on the first side and 3 minutes after flipping will yield a medium burger. Don't press on the burgers with your spatula while you are cooking --you'll squeeze out the juices.

ENJOY!

SWGLA—Southwest Grassfed Livestock Alliance
1210 Luisa Street, Suite 10
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Join SWGLA Today

New and Renewing members can send their \$25.00 tax deductible membership (or \$50 for producer membership) to: **SWGLA, 1210 Luisa Street, Suite 10 Santa Fe, NM 87505**

For more information, visit **www.grassfedlivestock.org**

You may also send your tax deductible contribution to the above address. ***Funding is needed to support SWGLA outreach activities.***

We thank you in advance for supporting SWGLA.

Name (please print) _____

Mailing Address _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **E-Mail:** _____