

FARMER-TO-FARMER: PASSING ON THE WISDOM
2009 Farm Walk Education Series

Sponsored by the WSU Small Farms Team (smallfarms.wsu.edu)
and Tilth Producers of Washington (www.tilthproducers.org)

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*Farm Walk Evaluation
Form...*

*Please fill out and leave
at the site*

THANK YOU!!!

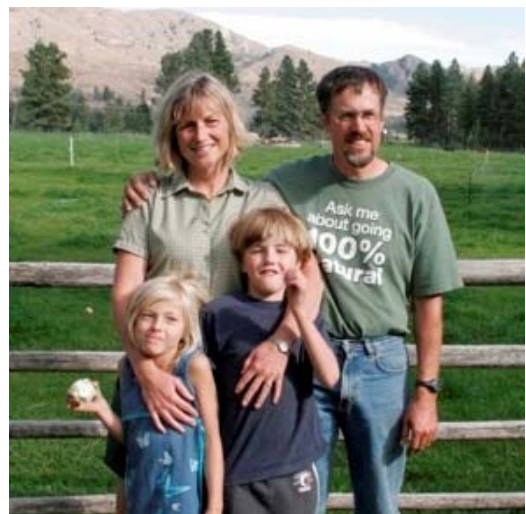


Crown S Ranch, LLC

The 50 acres that make up Crown "S" Ranch have been in the care of the Sukovaty family since 1968, when Val and George Sukovaty purchased it as a working family ranch. They raised five children here and now we -- Val and George's son Louis Sukovaty and his wife Jennifer Argraves -- are raising our two children here.

We come from a long line of farmers. Louis' mom's family came out west along the Oregon Trail in the 1860's and homesteaded in the Willamette Valley. His dad emigrated from Hungary, fleeing the Nazis and leaving behind a large farming property that had been in the Sukovaty family for hundreds of years. Jennifer was raised on her family's small farm in northern Idaho. We both grew up eating all-natural pastured livestock. At a time when it was common practice to use pesticides and herbicides, Val and George opted to leave the land as they found it: clean and green. When we took over Crown "S" Ranch in 1999, we followed their lead, raising all-natural, pastured livestock as well. We wouldn't consider feeding our children any other type of meat.

Our commitment to producing healthy food through sustainable farming was passed down to us by our parents and their parents before them. Now we are passing those values on to our children. Generations of knowledge have gone into raising the best and healthiest livestock possible on our ranch.





Crown "S" Ranch is a pasture-based, beyond organic farm in Washington's Methow Valley. We run a grass finishing operation raising cattle, pigs, and poultry using time-tested management-intensive pasture rotation, sometimes called grass farming. We layer the animals over certified organic pasture, coordinating their coverage of it so that each animal's use benefits the others. Our grass farming and animal husbandry maintains healthy conditions for our animals and land and produces tasty beef, pork, poultry, and eggs.

We raise cattle, pigs, laying hens, chickens, and turkeys on certified organic pastures.

Cattle. We "finish" cattle -- select weaned animals from a breeder and raise them to harvest weight -- on certified organic pastures. We feel lucky to get first pick of Methow Valley farmer Pete Scott's beautiful Angus Cross cattle. Scott's well-bred animals are born in spring and spend the summer on the range grasses of the Methow Valley with their mothers. Since Pete delivers animals in the fall, as is the typical practice in the valley, we needed enough hay to see our calves through until spring. Our new 70-acre easement allows us grow our own organic hay.

Our cattle have fresh pasture from spring until they are harvested in the fall. They spend 18 to 24 hours on one pasture before moving to the next, consuming a mixture of grasses, legumes, and shrubs, and are rotated over our twenty-one fields with the intent that no field is ever grazed below 3" nor allowed to grow above 12" -- the optimal zone for digestible nutrients.

At Crown "S" Ranch, we focus on prevention of pests and parasites. We never use insecticidal ear tags, dust our animals with pesticides, or use other toxic treatments. Following our cattle with poultry on our pastures reduces the fly count, since the birds eat the larva of flies and other pest insects. We control the flies that escape our chickens' notice using non-insecticide traps that we build ourselves, such as our passive horn fly trap. Parasites such as liver flukes and intestinal worms are kept in check through rotational grazing, since the steers rarely graze the same pasture more than once in three weeks - a period exceeding the life cycle of the majority of these parasites.



Pigs. We raise pigs on certified organic pastures, purchasing them as 7-week-old piglets in the spring and harvesting them in the fall.

Our pigs root, forage, and wallow in a fenced section of pasture with their skid-mounted pig house (we call it the Pasture Pig Palace), which provides shelter for the pigs and allows us to move them easily to a new section every other day. We supplement the pigs' foraging and rooting with organic pig feed (which we will produce ourselves in the future) and produce from our organic garden. The Okanogan farmer who provided our piglets in prior years retired, so we purchased piglets from a farm in Wilbur. Our kids love this since Charlotte's Web is of course a favorite.

Free-range laying hens provide our organic eggs. We receive the hens as day-old chicks, and as soon as they are ready to transition from their brooders, we move them onto our certified organic pasture. They are entirely free to run, with no fences constraining them.

Their mobile hen house protects them from predators at night and houses their supplemental feeder. We rotate the house onto pasture where cattle have recently grazed to encourage the hens to feed where grubs are plentiful, and we move their house when the hens' reliance on supplemental feed indicates that there is not enough food for them on the pasture.

Chickens. We start our broiler chickens in a brooding house and then move them onto pasture in a solar panel Chicken Train – a large floorless mesh enclosure that moves slowly over the pastures. This year we hope to share a new solar chicken train that is based on lessons learned from older versions.

The Chicken Train moves three times a day, covering twenty feet of certified organic pasture in a twenty minute period. This frequent movement keeps the chickens supplied with pasture and the pasture supplied with chicken manure.

Turkeys. We raise heritage turkeys and broad breasted whites on certified organic pastures with supplemental organic feed. This year, Corbett and Peter are raising over half of our turkeys during our busy time of year. They can give them lots of love and attention they need.

We started a second group later in the season, so the birds were younger and smaller at harvest than we expected. Raising the second round of heritage birds with the whites encouraged the heritage birds – which flew out of their enclosed pasture every day -- to stay closer to home.

Please find the most current regulations online, or by contacting the
WSDA by phone.
See both in the instructions below.

**THE HANDBOOK OF REGULATIONS FOR
DIRECT FARM MARKETING
“THE GREEN BOOK”
FIFTH EDITION
UPDATED ONLINE
A PUBLICATION OF
THE WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SMALL FARM & DIRECT MARKETING PROGRAM**

The fifth edition of this handbook was prepared by
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Also, the *Handbook of Regulations for Direct Marketing* is available for download in Adobe PDF format on the WSDA Website: <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/greenbook.htm>
AGR PUB 056 (R/6/06)

Inquiries regarding availability of this publication in alternative formats should be directed to the WSDA Receptionist at (360) 902-1976 or Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (360) 902-1996.

Note: The information included in this handbook is current at the time of publication. However, laws and regulations can change frequently. Please refer to the contacts listed for the most up-to-date information on requirements and fees.