



Caywood Farms
The Frank Family
Rougemont, North Carolina
Durham County

Section 1:

Caywood Farm
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Caywood Farm is a cow/calf operation owned and operated by the Frank family, Neil, Cathy and their son, Hunter. They calve out approximately 40 cows in the fall, with the majority of the weaned calves being marketed through the traditional beef supply chain. The Franks have also developed a small market of selling select, high quality calves to local farmers. Additionally, Caywood Farms is diving into the direct marketing side of the beef business and is selling grass-fed beef directly from the farm and at two local farmers markets.

The farm consists of 330 acres of which approximately 140 acres is pasture. The remainder of the farm is forestland. The land is gently rolling with ½ mile of frontage on the Flat River and has several creeks running through it. 300 of the 330 acres are enrolled in a permanent conservation easement.

The Frank family moved to Rougemont, North Carolina in 1995 and purchased the majority of the farm in 2000 because protecting farmland and open spaces is important to the Frank family. Some initial planning had begun to turn the land into a housing development in the late 1990's. Cathy's family had been involved in land protection on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and Neil had grown up in the wide open spaces of north central Nebraska, so farmland preservation was important to the Franks.

At that time the farm was predominantly tobacco land along with some hay production managed by a neighboring farmer since the early 1980's. That relationship continued with that producer until the tobacco buyout in 2004 when he retired. At that point, another producer started growing hay, wheat, soybeans and corn.

In 2008 the first cows were purchased which brought on another conversion to the current pasture based system. The decision to go into the cattle business was made for three main reasons. Neil's family has been producing cattle for many years in Nebraska, and there was a familiarity with this enterprise along with the changes it has gone through over the years. The Franks feel that mechanical tillage in the Piedmont of North Carolina is cost prohibitive due to small field size so cattle are a good fit. Finally, they are passionate about agriculture along with preserving and protecting its future.

The Franks have worked with many organizations while making improvements on their farm. These include: Durham Soil and Water; NRCS; North Carolina Wildlife Resources; Amazing Grazing; NC Cattlemen's Association; NC Forage and Grasslands Council; USDA and NCDA.

Section 2:

Caywood Farms utilizes high tensile around the perimeter of their 10 permanently fenced pastures. Additionally, the Franks are huge believers in polywire and use it regularly to rotationally graze and strip graze depending on the season.

Fencing along 2000 feet of creeks and blue line streams has been installed to exclude livestock from those natural resources. Additionally, they have established stream buffers and exclusion practices to minimize runoff and soil erosion.

In order to utilize the pastures and forages in the most efficient manner, the Franks knew they needed to supply water to all of the pastures. Water system installation began in 2011 with the digging of a well and laying 3500 feet of 2 inch pipe as the backbone of the system. Over the next several years as fence was built and pasture developed, pipe was installed from that backbone to the new waterers in the pastures. In all, thirteen waterers have been placed on Caywood Farms.

The Franks have a diverse forage system in order to provide as many grazing days as possible for their herd while utilizing the environmental challenges and blessings that may be provided to them. There are 100 acres of novel endophyte fescue that was planted in 2010 through the Cropland Conversion Program. Twenty acres of Native Warm Season Grass comprised of big blue stem and Indian grass were planted in 2014 to extend the grazing season into the summer. The Franks also plant 20 acres of annuals. For summer annuals, the forage choices have been millet, sudan grass and sorghum. Oats, triticale and ryegrass have been utilized as cool season annuals. They purchase any hay needed and feed most of that during the fall calving season.

Always looking to improve and not afraid of something different, the Franks recently thinned 16 acres of plantation pines which they are converting into silvopasture.

Resource management goals at Caywood Farms are to improve our soil quality and quantity through regenerative grazing practices. They use rotational grazing practices along with stockpiling winter feed to reduce the total energy requirements of the farm. They also feel that minimize energy use and cost by incorporating no-till drilling and broadcast seeding to minimize the mechanical tilling on the farm.

Section 3:

The Franks are always willing to host events at their farm to not only showcase the practices they have implemented to protect and improve the natural resources they have under their care but also to provide education to other producers about natural resource conservation and other best management practices related to beef cattle production. They have worked with Soil and Water, Extension and other groups multiple times to host field days related to grazing management, forage management and other topics. Some of these include:

Amazing Grazing Novel Endophyte conversion clinic
Tri County Pasture Field Day (Orange, Person, Durham)
Orange Durham Cattlemen's Association Summer Clinic

Bull City Burger and Brewery employee outing
Firsthand Foods membership meeting

Caywood Farm is the recipient of the following awards: 2004 Durham County Conservation Farm Family of the Year and Area IV Conservation Farm Family, 2017 Durham County Conservation Farm Family of the Year, 2004 and 2008 Durham County Forest Manager of the Year.

Neil is a past chairman of the Durham County Farmland Preservation Board, Past President and current Treasurer of the Orange Durham Cattlemen's Association, and Director of the NC Cattlemen's Association.



Cattle grazing
sudan grass
planted for the
second season
after clearing trees



Cattle grazing
in silvopasture
during the first
summer after
prescribed
burn



Use of
polywire to
strip graze
cattle on
stockpiled
fescue



Cattle grazing millet the first year after clearing pasture

Prescribed burn of thinned pines that are being developed for silvopasture





Hay bales are rolled out to help distribute nutrients across wider area of pasture

Transition to novel endophyte fescue began with burn-smother-burn

