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Stacking Farm Enterprises Maximizes Profits and Minimizes Burnout

By Mark Shepherd

CANTON, New York: In Greg Judy's book, *No Risk Ranching*, he quoted Allan Nation, "Your goal should be making a living from the land not to own it all." It's not about OWNING the land, it's about having ACCESS to the land and the ability to determine how that land is managed."

If I have to buy \$100,000 of land in order to farm, I will not see a profit until that 100K is generated back through sales. If I lease land, the lease payments are directly deductible so there is a definite tax advantage. But I STILL have to sell enough product to pay for the lease.

What if there was an even BETTER strategy for a startup farmer? What about farming on land for FREE? Or as a recent SGF article (July 2024) about grazing sheep under solar panels pointed out, what if it is even possible to be PAID to farm?

Joel Howie of Canton Apples has apple orchards. He and his

wife Becky have a main chunk of land where his farm stand is located. He also manages multiple orchards on other people's land. He wanted to incorporate livestock, but he was already fully engaged with his orchards and his day job as a real estate appraiser. Knowing the dangers of burnout he embraced the idea of Enterprise Stacking.

He's created infrastructure with a cider mill and farm stand on a main highway and gathered a team of collaborators: Dan, (who I call "Blueberry Dan") grows blueberries and sells them at Joel's stand. Another Dan, (who I call "Cider Dan") has a business making hard cider from Joel's apples. Then there is Arden, a beekeeper or apiarist on site who will be selling his honey at the stand. Another enterprise we affectionately call "the Tea Ladies," Patti and Sharon rent Canton Apples' commercial kitchen to make unique tea blends.

Through collaboration, I benefit from Joel's outgoing personality.

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A permanent water trough dividing a fence line with clean cold water at Deep Grass Graziers. Dan Glenn shares how water adds value to his operation on page 10.

Grass Farmers Need Each Other

By Abram Bowerman

SPICKARD, Missouri: I'm not the only shepherd in step to the rhythms of nature, and I didn't learn everything I know the hard way. Without working examples

to model I might still be trying to hybridize confinement jug lambing with grass farming. I have learned from many shepherds and other stockmen.

The point I want to drive home

Continued on p. 4

Meadow Talk



Sleuthing Disease

By Joel Salatin

A piece written by Breeauna Sagdal carried in *Beef News* caught my attention when it pointed out that in the mounting hysteria over avian influenza in dairy cattle, no beef cattle had joined the diseased. It got me to thinking about how we as a culture respond to sickness generally. And then that made me

think about the many ways we farmers respond to sickness.

The main sickness we talk about here in the pages of *Stockman Grass Farmer* are weeds. Almost every one of our regular columnists addresses weeds every so often because our inboxes are full of questions about weeds. Whether indigenous or invasive, weeds are generally considered, in the greater farming community, as an expression of neglect.

In a decidedly contrarian view, SGF aficionados routinely downplay weed hysteria and write about changing management to affect vegetation. Guru Greg Judy even itemized positive aspects of autumn olive, viewed by most of us as part of the curse. In these pages, we often refer to weeds as forbs and generally agree that if an animal will eat it, the plant probably has some nutritional or otherwise redeeming value.

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SGF's Business & Marketing Schools with Joel, pages 5 and 10

Stacking Enterprises

Continued from p. 1

his network, experience, support and his growing customer base. Most importantly I benefit from his reputation in the community.

People like and respect him. That matters in a small town. He gets the benefit of my growing experience with sheep, cows and pigs and land stewardship as well as my 45 years of experience as an entrepreneur and regular posts on

YouTube.

Joel was looking for someone to regeneratively graze his 70+ acres. I've been on three other pieces of land and dealt with several land owners that didn't really "get" what I was trying to do.

When I mentioned my frustrations to my friends Stephanie Miller and Gary Pecore at Adirondack Greenhouses they introduced me to Joel. The synergy and collaborative potential was immediately obvious.

As soon as my sheep were done with lambing this spring, I moved them to Canton Apples. The sheep are happy to eat the multitude of forbs (aka weeds) and brushy trees like buckthorn and willows that have started encroaching on his pastures. Until his ownership, this land was a conventional farm with continuous cattle grazing. No nutrients or minerals were added. Hay was taken for decades.

The multi-tiered collaboration is a win-win-win.

WIN FOR CANTON APPLES

1. Sheep fertilize the land.
2. Sheep eat weeds and brush.
3. Sheep can graze his orchards down before winter, thereby minimizing vole pest damage.
4. Sheep and my Maremma livestock guardian dogs add to the allure for people coming to the farm, adding potential for future agritourism!
5. Without any effort, learning curve or financial investment on his part, his farm stand can now offer grassfed regenerative lamb to his existing customer base and attract new customers.
6. As I grow my beef herd and cycle in small numbers of hogs, the farm stand can add that as well.
7. My active YouTube channel can promote his business in the process of me telling my story.
8. He has more to feature on his Facebook page. CantonApple+CiderLLC.

WIN FOR HEALING PASTURES

1. I have a permanent rent free home for my sheep with highly nutritious weeds, natural shade and good water.
2. The bottom land may be a challenge in wet years but in dry years it's like drought insurance.
3. Not only is it free, but it pays me to have a highly visible, local place to sell my lamb without building my own farm stand and developing a local customer base.
4. I have a like minded business

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collaborator to run ideas by.

5. We can help each other succeed in multiple ways: Equipment sharing, extra help during busy times, selling each other's products in our different contact circles.

6. Because Joel's land is close to town, it expands my opportunities to graze his neighbors' properties, which are not being farmed any more.

7. His property is also next to a Solar Farm that's being built. I will be contacting them about running my sheep under their panels.

8. Joel collects compost from the two best restaurants in town. He's connected me with one of them who bought all my racks of lamb from my most recent batch of wethers.

9. Joel is close friends with someone on the local hospital board, which owns an office building on 400 acres of brushy land just down the road. "Wouldn't it be cool," he said, "if patients in the waiting room could look out the window and see sheep grazing?"

WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY:



1. Stacked agricultural enterprises are more likely to be resilient and succeed because farmers are not "going it alone." Burnout is a real issue when we attempt to provide multiple products. With other entrepreneurs it's easier to ask for and give a helping hand when needed.

2. Multiple products increases the likelihood of bringing more customers and keeping and adding more word of mouth advertising.

3. Working with others who are also passionate about farming makes it a lot more enjoyable. That positive energy ripples outward making the community a better place to live.

4. The master mind principle. I first heard about this from Napoleon Hill's classic book *Think and Grow Rich*. The concept is as old as the Bible, "Where two or more are gathered."

5. Oh! What about creating

jobs? Perhaps not immediately, but as stacked enterprises grow, jobs in the local community will be created.

In the short time I've been there, Joel has already connected me to one of the adjacent land owners who was totally excited to have my ram flock on her land out of sight and far enough away from the ewes so that we can control our breeding season. But what's more important for those of us who are passionate about regenerative agriculture: we have someone to talk about this revolution who doesn't roll their eyes and try to change the subject. ■

Mark Shepard is a musician, minister and serial entrepreneur who has been starting a farm from scratch since 2019 in Northern New York State's St. Lawrence River Valley. His website: <https://HealingPastures.org> Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@healingpasturesfarm89>

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