



Producing and Marketing Grass-fed Lamb

(530) 305-3270

Flying Mule Farm
www.flyingmulefarm.com

flyingmule@wavecable.com



- Overview and Farm History
- Our Story...
 - Why we're grass-fed
 - We're local
 - We're predator friendly (but our guard dogs aren't!)
 - Our grazing management enhances the environment
 - Supporting other ranchers who share our vision
- Challenges and Opportunities
 - Lessons we've learned (and some we're still learning!)

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- We founded Flying Mule Farm in Auburn in 2001.
- We are currently converting to mule-based vegetable farming and firewood production.
- Also produce eggs and pastured poultry.
- We have been raising sheep since 1990.
- Our daughters Lara and Emma participate in our farming endeavors.



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Overview and History

- We currently own roughly 100 head of mostly Dorper-cross sheep.
 - We like moderate frame size – they finish easier on grass!
- In 2007, we marketed ~150 lambs.
- We also custom graze sheep for other producers.
- We purchase outside feeder lambs when we have extra grass.
- We purchase finished lambs that are produced according to our management protocols:
 - 100% grass-fed
 - No added hormones
 - No antibiotics
 - Predator-friendly (as we define it)
- Our land base consists of 2 leased ranches (in Lincoln and Auburn) plus our home property.

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Highland Farms

- We use Highland Farms as a brand name, which allows us to purchase lambs and goats from other producers.
- We believe in supporting other ranchers who share our vision of sustainable livestock production.
- We may begin marketing pastured poultry under the same brand name.

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Why we're grass-fed...

- We are grass farmers, and sheep are our 4-legged harvesters.
- As ruminants, sheep are ideally suited to thrive on grass.
- Grass-fed meat is high in Omega-3 fatty acids, beta carotene and CLAs.
- By managing our grass carefully, we minimize the need to import other feed sources (like grains).

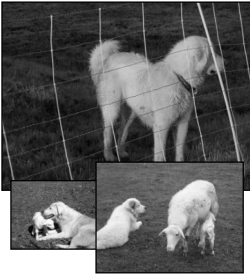


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What predator friendly means to us...



- We use guardian dogs and electric fences to protect our sheep from predators.
- We feel that we've established a relationship with the predators in our operation – they are trained to look elsewhere for a meal.
- In a drastic situation, we might consider lethal control (which we tell our customers).

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Environmental Enhancement



- We enhance the environment by:
 - Restoring native and perennial grasses
 - Controlling yellow starthistle, blackberries and other invasive weeds
 - Restoring and improving pastures
 - Reducing wildfire fuels
 - Eliminating competitive weeds and brush in newly established timber stands
- Our winter ranch is owned by the Placer Land Trust – we're managing vernal pool habitat!

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Environmental Enhancement

- The key elements of our management intensive grazing system are:
 - Low stress livestock handling using well-trained dogs
 - Portable electric fencing (with a battery-powered low impedance energizer)
 - Short grazing periods followed by lengthy rest periods
 - Regular adjustments in stocking rate based on forage growth



Electric charge on the netting is kept between 7 and 9 kilovolts (7-9,000 volts). The charge pulses every other second on the netting and only lasts 0.003 milliseconds each pulse.



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Partnerships



- We purchase feeder lambs and finished lambs from ranchers who share our vision of sustainable production.
- Flying Mule Farm is committed to educating new producers, youth and the community
- We also provide orientation sessions for new landowners and visitors

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Community Engagement



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- Our lamb is available through the following outlets:
 - Farmer's Markets in Placer County
 - Carpe Vino, Le Bilig, Moody's Bistro, Christy Hill (and other restaurants)
 - Riverhill Farm CSA
 - Directly from the farm

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• Production

- Grass-based production depends on effective fencing, predator control and stockwater systems.
- Pasture lambing works if you have a good guard dog!
- Sheep can be trained to eat a wide-variety of forages.
- We're struggling to control foot rot – it's related to our need to bring in outside sheep.

• Processing

- We're lucky to have Superior Farms – they've been an outstanding partner!
- Tour your processor's facility if you can – you'll learn a great deal!
- Written cutting and pricing instructions are critical!
- Retail product yield is about 30-35% of live weight.
- Our customers provide invaluable feedback about cuts.

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• Marketing

- Our website (www.flyingmulefarm.com) has been a tremendous help.
- Recipes help move the lower priced cuts (I can sell "tons" of riblets and shoulder roasts)!
- Free samples for restaurants help create a relationship.
- Restaurants can help create "pull through."
- Strategic product donations help increase awareness.

• Sales

- Pricing is a continuous learning process.
- Discounting to move a particular cut can be effective.
- Wholesaling is rarely profitable for us – we do it from time to time for cash flow reasons.
- At the farmer's market, it pays to be able to suggest cooking ideas – you have to know your product!
- Know the difference between customers and consumers!

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Closing Thoughts...

- Our customers really want us to succeed!
 - They'll help spread the word about our products.
 - They'll help with deliveries and logistics.
 - They'll even help with production activities!
- Our story and our quality are equally important.
- LOCAL – GRASS-FED – SUSTAINABLE!!! – these elements work for us!

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