



Photos courtesy of Grace Wyly Farm

ENVIRONMENTAL BENCHMARKING

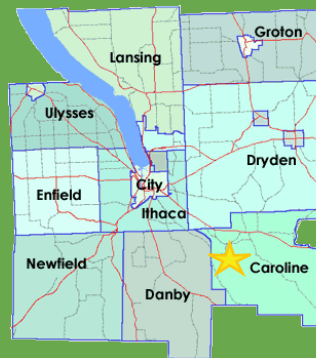
CASE STUDY: Grace Wyly Farm

Brendan Wyly, a small-scale pastured beef producer located in the Brooktondale area of Tompkins County is helping to advance regenerative agriculture by being conscious of what consumers want and what they are willing to spend their food dollars on. Knowing that consumers desire high quality meats that are produced with the sensitivity to animal care, as well as positively stewarding ecological systems and environmental health, are aspects of farming that Brendan strives to make a priority.

Starting small was and is important for Brendan to learn the ins and outs of the grass-fed beef and organic hay businesses. Growing up in Hereford, Texas, “Beef Capital of the world”, he is deliberate in looking at alternative ways of producing beef. Competing with conventional beef producers has its challenges. He has realized that his alternative model for producing grass-fed beef is more labor-intensive and requires more farmland to pasture animals than compared to conventional systems. Even his selection of choosing the Belted Galloway beef breed was intentional. “Belties” are a traditional Scottish beef breed that are well adapted to poor upland pastures and can withstand the windy cold winter months that New York holds. Regular pasture rotation helps to ensure that high quality forage exists for cattle grazing, even in those droughty years. Watering his livestock, while keeping them out of the waterways through new fencing, are also very important criteria to this small farmer.

Grasses at Brendan’s farm are what grazing livestock consumes as their mainstay diet. These are organic hay

Farm Details



MUNICIPALITY:
Brooktondale

FARM SIZE:
28 Acres

PRODUCTS:
Beef

PRACTICES:

- No Till
- Cover Crops
- Rainwater Runoff Containment System
- Grass Waterways
- Field Drainage by Ditches
- Field Retention Ponds
- Rotational Grazing
- Windbreaks
- High-Efficiency Lighting
- Fuel-Efficient Vehicles

MOST PROUD OF:

Rotational grazing

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lands so pesticides or artificial fertilizers are not added. As pasture grasses are maintained into the future, deep root systems will continue to develop. These improved grassed pastured lands, with deep roots, will help to keep water in the soil and will reduce erosion, all while improving soil health. Natural fertilizers come as livestock manure, adding to the natural biology to the soil.

Rotational grazing and keeping his cattle from physically entering the on-farm pond are features that hold pride for this small farmer. He has seen improved weed control in the pastures as well as healthier livestock because of these specific practices. This farm is part of the Six Mile Creek Watershed, an important drinking water source for the City of Ithaca. Its headwaters begin in the Towns of Dryden and Caroline. Brendan's efforts and investments in keeping these waters clean have important ecosystem benefits that include cleaner waters that drain into the creek resulting in less sediment and reduced risk of microbial and protozoan contamination from his pasturelands. We all benefit from these cleaner waters.

Starting this operation is possible because of additional off-farm income. It can reduce the risk of maneuvering the learning curve, production routines and learning of specific market opportunities. As this operation continues to evolve, our community will see a unique, and rather handsome, livestock breed on the Ithaca-area hillsides. We can also appreciate the dedicated efforts that Brendon makes to keep those downstream waterways clean.

This is one of eight case studies created as part of Cornell Cooperative Extension's 2020 Agricultural Benchmarking Study, funded through a grant by the Park Foundation. For more information or to read more studies visit our website at www.ccetompkins.org/SustainableAg or contact Graham Savio at gs695@cornell.edu



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