

# Waupaca County Success from the Field

## Fun and Profitable Grazing



### Background

“Solbakken” in Danish means “sunny hill,” which is a fitting name for the picturesque Solbakken Farm located just south of Waupaca, Wisconsin. The rotationally-grazed beef farm is operated by Art and Rheta Richardson, and includes rolling hills and large wetlands. Purchased by Rheta’s grandfather in 1920, the farm has been in agricultural production ever since, evolving from a wheat farm, to dairy, and now, to grazing. After selling the dairy herd due to an injury in 2006, Art and Rheta began thinking about alternative ways to farm. During a conversation in 2011 with Lisa Neuenfeldt, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist for the Waupaca Service Center, the grazing idea was discussed. This discussion was followed up by on-farm visits by both Resource Conservation and Development and NRCS to begin the planning process.

### Highlights

In 2012, Art and Rheta utilized the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the first time and began rotationally grazing 62 acres. Through an additional EQIP sign-up and the Conservation Stewardship Program, they are now successfully grazing 215 acres and managing a busy direct-marketing beef business. Their operation also includes stockpiling forage for late fall grazing and bale grazing in the winter months.

When asked what they are most proud of, the Richardsons’ highlights include: conserving the land and improving water quality, recycling nutrients on the farm, producing all of their own feed, providing habitat for earthworms, monarchs, pollinators and waterfowl, and having healthy animals. Art and Rheta are especially proud of the community pride that comes from local people who support the way they are producing food and improving the environment. They take pride in the resiliency of Solbakken Farm and the pasture’s ability to easily withstand periods of drought or heavy rain due to their healthy soils.

### Future Plans

Although a lot of work goes into managing a successful farm, Art and Rheta say “it’s fun!” They are always making improvements to their operation, which include a finished new fence and livestock pipeline project. “It’s a real joy being able to work with the Richardsons and watch the farm’s evolution,” says District Conservationist Lisa Neuenfeldt. The Richardsons’ hope to continue to improve the farm for many years to come.



Art and Rheta out moving the cattle.



The cow-calf herd.

