

Virginia StrikeForce Spotlight

Amherst County



Roscoe Goode Ford Acres Farm

Amherst Grower Stays True to Farming Roots

If you ask Roscoe Goode about the horsepower of his farming equipment, his answer might surprise you. The Amherst County farmer actually uses draft horses to work his land. He's also installed a number of soil and water quality practices and it's this unique blend of modern and traditional farming methods that sets Ford Acres Farm apart from other Central Virginia agricultural operations.

Goode's Grandfather Samuel S. Ford, Sr., originally purchased the 68 acre tract with his oldest son, Jesse R. Ford, in the early 1950's. The land was wooded and overgrown with plenty of Amherst County rocks. The Fords cut pulp wood and fenced the property, plowed a spot for a garden and expanded the cleared area to include a corn field and pasture.

The land remained in farm use as the family raised registered and cross-bred Durocs hogs along with a commercial cattle herd, which they used for food and farm income. Horses were also a fixture on Ford Acres from the start with registered Saddle Bred and Quarter Horses grazing the pasture along with draft horses and mules.

Today, Goode manages a beef cattle and draft horse operation with some chickens, and a variety of vegetables grown for sale and home use. However, he doesn't do it alone. Ford Acres remains a family farm with uncles, cousins, and their children all pitching in to help keep the operation running.

His uncle, George W. Ford, Sr., and cousin, George W. Ford, Jr., take care of farming duties on week days and weekends when Goode cannot get there from his home in Richmond.



Farm Highlights

- Beef Cattle
- Registered Percheron Draft Horses
- Chickens
- Vegetables

Installed Practices

- Brush Management
- Well and Pumping Plant
- Pipeline
- Watering Facilities
- Critical Area Planting
- Mulching

Another uncle, Herman A. Ford, Sr., was very active on the farm until health issues made it impossible for him to continue working there. Goode's cousin, Carl Conner, suggested converting an old shed to a chicken house and helped complete the project. Just this spring, three generations helped plant the garden.

Goode began working with Rustburg District Conservationist Don Yancey when he realized that he needed to better manage his water resources to expand his cattle and vegetable operations. Other resource concerns include water quality, stream bank erosion, sufficient forage for livestock, and plant condition in the vegetable garden.

He signed up for a number of pasture renovation and water conservation practices and is working to complete cross fencing for rotational grazing. The family will also be installing exclusion fencing to control livestock access to streams on the property.

His future goals for the family farm include producing custom-raised beef and lamb, and vegetables grown under organic conditions. He'd also like to grow flowers for local florists, establish a market where his neighbors can get fresh, locally-grown produce, and offer jobs for area youth during the growing season.

Goode would also like to help others make small-scale family farms profitable now and protect them for future generations. He is especially interested in sharing his knowledge of how to use draft animals to be more productive and cost efficient

"I participate in draft horse field days and instructional events to promote the draft horse industry," says Goode. "I'd like to have farm tours for school kids and adults to demonstrate use of horse-drawn equipment and would love to do a comparison of cost using draft animals versus tractor on one acre of land."

"I want to leave a legacy that we helped someone recognize the peace and tranquility of nature and God's gift to us all and that we left the land better than it was handed down to us."

Planned Practices

- Exclusion fencing for improved water quality and reduced stream bank erosion
- Cross fencing for rotational grazing
- Seasonal high tunnel to increase his produce profits
- Herbaceous weed control
- Forage and biomass plantings for improved efficiency and maximum productivity