



Bruce Hammill, General Manager of McCormick Farms, LLC in Spring Lake, NC

intentionally farmed by low-stress methods; in line with those developed by Temple Grandin, who has made livestock her life's work. The cattle are pastured full-time, feeding on pearl millet, Bermuda and Bahia grasses – supplemented by a product called Sweet-Pro, compressed blocks of distiller grains. Every few days, the herd is rotated amongst 15 paddocks about 15 acres in size, keeping crowding down and fresh grass plentiful.

"It's top-notch service from guys who know a lot about cattle," says Bruce about Steven Broadwell of Ranch Solutions. Steven provides a crew to help with pregnancy checks, vaccinations, and weighing the cows. This means that there's no need for Bruce to maintain a permanent staff for cattle management, and he gets expertise into the bargain.

Calves are sold as feeder calves to other farmers; some through private treaty sales to stockers in the North Carolina mountains, who specialize in grass-fed beef and know the McCormick reputation. The farm raises some of its own calves to maturity as well; selling them when they reach 1,200-1,300 pounds. The meat – healthy and flavorful due to these methods – is sold to local consumers and used in catering at the events held at the farm. They also sell mama/calf pairs, but most of their breeding cattle live their whole lives on the farm.

Bruce jumps the fence wire, and the cows and calves scatter. He hollers, a sort of cross between yelling, "Hey you!" and yodeling. The cows stop, turn toward him,

and sound back in a bovine call and response, until the whole herd is in a full-throttle moo.

Like most farms, McCormick Farms must make every acre count. This is where Bruce's Virginia Tech marketing degree comes in. Besides their low-stress cow/calf operation, they sell timber and pine straw, rent out land for hunting, grow hay, and even maintain a granite quarry on the property.

With the average age of North Carolina farmers around 59-years-old, and the number of farms dropping, a gap has developed between the farmer and the consumer. Grocery stores – "kingdoms of convenience" Bruce calls them – mean people don't really know where their food comes from or how it is raised. Bruce has a passion for eradicating this problem. He strives to educate the community about farming in general and their methods.

"People say, 'You still kill them.' Farmers – we do this because we love the animals," says Bruce. "People lose the perspective that this is a business. What we do is great for the cows, great for the land. If it was anything other than that, we wouldn't be doing it." He works to educate the public through tours and workshops. Visitor's groups, teams from Ft. Bragg, and local schools are among the people who attend. It's become another source of income.

The historic McCormick Farm makes for grand scenery of pastures and rolling forested hills, and the beef makes for good eating. In addition to the informative workshops and tours, McCormick Farms offers a venue for all kinds of events: weddings, receptions, corporate retreats, and family reunions. It's called "agri-tourism" – offering these kinds of services on a farm. It's a versatile site, suitable for any event, with catering by B&B Catering.

Bruce works hard at developing the many areas of the family business. He ties the multiple areas together, which he says makes for a sort of synergy. Each

## Agri-tourism:

opening a farm up to the community and bringing in revenue not through crops or livestock, but through the land itself, as a diversion or destination for guests. Agri-tourism is the latest tool in the farmer's shed. Bruce's latest addition to the agri-tourism side of the farm's operation is the inclusion of a race called the Spartan Run.

Spartan bills itself as 'The World's Best Obstacle Race. Period.'

A brainchild of world-class adventure racer Joe DeSena, Spartan Race is (from their web site) "a sport, community, a philosophy, a training and nutrition program – with daily advice, a podcast, a series of books, an activity for kids, workout gear, a media channel, an NBC Sports series, a digital magazine, and a timed obstacle race."

Spartan puts on races all over the country for those intrepid adventurers who make up the membership that want to challenge themselves and prove what their training has accomplished. They frequently use farms as their venues, and members talked to Bruce about using McCormick Farms. Bruce says they treat farmers well. Among other things, they leave the farm the way it was, despite the obstacles and courses they build. They are mindful of the fact that the farm business has to go on, even on raced. Bruce says that working with Spartan makes great relationships.

The end result was a Spartan Race held at McCormick Farms. This year's race will take place on September 23-24. Athletes wishing to participate in the race can sign up so long as spots are available, right up until the day of the race. Spots can become limited; sooner is better. (at the time of this writing, one of the races had only 19 spots left).

Check out the following links for more information on the Spartan's Fayetteville Super and Sprint Weekend at McCormick Farms.

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