

Meet Your Local Conservationists, The Garcias

Hereford NRCD

Submitted by Joanne M. Roberts, Conservation Biologist

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Micah and Jenny Garcia had a dream of owning and running a small family farm while providing their growing family with home grown meat and dairy products. With the help of their family and hard work they are doing just that.

Micah comes from a generational landowner with rangeland and agricultural fields in Palominas and Jenny comes from a generational dairy family that relocated from Pennsylvania to Elfrida when she was a young girl. The family land that Micah and Jenny are now moving cattle and producing forage on has been in his family for over 100 years but has not produced in over 50 years. Owing to the old philosophy that commercial ranching would not pay off, Micah's family simply left the land unattended until two years ago. It was at that time the Garcias decided to take the journey to sustainable ranching. First, they looked to their own pork and beef needs, then they had a larger vision to produce meat products for the public. That is how I personally found out about Coyote Song Farm. My husband was at a local farmer's market when he came across the Garcia's product. It could be a coincidence, but I do not generally believe in coincidences. Working with the Hereford NRCD Board of Supervisors, it was a natural fit for me to contact the Garcias to learn more about their business and how the District could play a role in their long-term strategy for success.



Micah and Jenny have embraced rotational grazing management and regenerative agriculture practices. Much of what they have learned about biomimicry strategies and the principles of Agroecology such as crop production, soil control, soil management, and water quality began from studying the teachings of Ray Archuleta, a retired NRCS Certified Professional Soil Scientist. (Mr. Archuleta retired after 30 years working in livestock sciences as a livestock specialist as well as an NRCS Conservation Agronomist.) Putting into practice what they learned, while continuing



to understand the concepts and practices of sustainable yield, Micah initiated a rotational grazing regimen. Finding the right balance between his herd size and his available forage is essential to good grazing management. Micah starts with five cows per four acres and adjusts according to seasonally available monthly forage as well as annual forage production. Annual production varies

based on natural conditions, and the Garcias also irrigate their agricultural fields to maintain available forage throughout the year. For healthier livestock and ultimately a healthier meat product, the Garcias use natural insect repellents to minimize introducing harmful insecticides into the environment. In addition, they plant favorable cover crops seasonally to improve soil nutrients, biodiversity, water filtration, and to sequester CO₂ in the soil.

Although relatively new to running their cow/calf and sow/piglet operation, Micah and Jenny have already seen the environmental benefits of their hard work and management decisions as well as the rewards of providing a healthier product to their family and to the public. Successes such as finding the right butcher for beef and pork and an increase in demand for their products, as well as dreams of expanding to a steer operation, are a few ways that reinforce their decision to run a small family farm. Additionally, they are working with the Cochise Conservation and Recharge Network, in which the Hereford NRCD is a key partner, to establish grazing allotments at the Three Canyons Stormwater and Effluent Recharge Project area. All these efforts and others demonstrate their commitment to themselves, their family, and to the public. The Hereford NRCD is here to work with landowners like the Garcias to provide assistance and expertise to achieve conservation of natural resources while maintaining economic viability for this way of life.

¹ Interviews with Micah and Jenny conducted by Joanne M. Roberts on sight, 20 Oct 2020, 26 Oct 2020, and 4 Nov 2020.

² Article reviewed by the Garcias and approved as written, 9 Dec 2020.

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