



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

FACT SHEET

October 2015

AGRICULTURE: WE'RE HALF WAY THERE ***Horn Family, Delta Springs Farm***

Mount Solon, VA: At Delta Springs Farm, three generations of the Horn family



Three generations of the Horn Family, from left to right, Joe, Chuck, Olivia, and Charles.

raise chickens, dairy replacement heifers, and beef cattle. Charles Horn and his wife Faye run the operation along with their son Chuck, his wife Jill, and grandchildren Joe and Olivia.

“In 1936 my grandfather owned 129 acres. They had a very diverse operation with just about everything—hogs, chickens, sheep, cattle, and horses,” Charles explains.

“Things are a lot different now. We are

much more intense and have to farm a lot more acres to make things work. We are much more aware of our environment now too and how our actions can affect people downstream.”

For example, fences along waterways keep livestock from fouling streams. “All of our perennial streams are fenced so our cows don’t have access to them,” he says. “We used the soil and water programs to help us put in watering stations throughout the farm so we could rotate our livestock. Because of the way we constructed the fences it is much easier to get our cows into the barnyard now.”

The fencing effort also includes neighboring farms along Freemason Run, a stream running through Delta Springs. All the farmers along the Run’s entire six miles have fenced the streambanks, making the waterway livestock free.

The Horns raise two million broiler chickens each year and grow all the roughage for their cattle including corn, hay, and small grain silage. They also use many Best Management Practices, including rotational grazing, cover crops, no-till, stream exclusion, nutrient management, and variable rate application of fertilizer. Much of their cropland is high in soil phosphorus so the farm is very limited in what manure and fertilizer they can apply. The Horns sell most of their poultry manure to areas in need of phosphorus.

“We are proud of the conservation practices we have installed on our farm,” Charles says. “We could not have done it without the technical and financial assistance from U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District.”

Keeping livestock out of streams has proven herd health benefits. It is also a clear sign to downstream neighbors and other community members of your ethics and environmental stewardship.

Try these options to keep cattle healthy by keeping them out of streams:

- Off-stream watering systems
- Stream fencing
- Stream crossings
- Buffer strips
- Rotational Grazing

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the state agricultural best management cost-share programs can help cover expenses for certain livestock stream exclusion projects that are built to specification.

~

This is one in a series of articles about farmers who have implemented conservation practices to improve farm operations and water quality in nearby streams, demonstrating how agriculture has achieved half of the nutrient reductions necessary to clean up local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.

The author, Robert Whitescarver, lives in Swoope, Virginia, and can be contacted at bobby.whitescarver@gettingmoreontheground.com.

~

visit cbf.org