

One Step at a Time: Building a Successful Farm Business Holistically

Tricia Park
Creekside Meadows Farm
New Woodstock New York

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Tricia and her husband Matt started on 26 acres with an old barn near Syracuse NY. The barn was turned into a house. Later after their son Cameron was born they added on 2 Hereford beef cattle and 12 laying hens. As they grew in knowledge and experience they eventually added on a donkey, more hens, a few piglets, meat chickens, turkeys, a small herd of Scottish highlanders, ducks, and a jersey milk cow named Molly.

Their goal was always to raise food for themselves. Then they started selling to some neighbors, friends, family and found there was a market for their products.

The time came in 2008 when they made the difficult decision to sell the farm and take that equity to purchase something larger and more suited to their farm plans.

In 2009 the farm went on the market and sold in December 2010. They spent 7 ½ months in a camper on a few acres behind Matt's parents. Late July 2011 they finally moved into the new 150 acre farm that is only 20 minutes from their old farm.

They raised and sold last year: 6 beef, 18 pigs, 800 meat chickens and 45 turkeys.

Tricia will share some of their experiences and knowledge:

- How they grew the farm from homestead/hobby farm to a successful and still growing multi-species grazing farm.
- Some things that worked and didn't work for them.
- How most of they did was done with little to no debt.
- How they attracted customers.
- Why and how their sales are mostly from the farm.
- How they balanced the growing farm with family time.
- They types and breeds of animals they raise.
- Why they decided to sell the old farm.

- How the Beginning Women Farmer's Program and HMI played such an important role in their decision to purchase the 150 acre farm and how it is integral to the farm operation now.
- Some of their plans and goals for the future.

Park Family Background

Tricia was a mechanic in the US Air Force stationed in Turkey and later in NY Air National Guard. She has had many jobs: grocery store night manager, legal assistant, data processor for insurance agent, house cleaner, editorial assistant, volunteer EMT/medic/firefighter. Tricia had no farming experience except for the 99 apple trees in her backyard growing up or seeing the Holstein cows at neighboring farms. As a child she had a goat try to eat her shirt and was chased by a huge tom turkey at a petting zoo. She finally got over the trauma.

Tricia is a graduate of year 1 of the Beginning Women Farmers Program in NY and has been a mentor for year 2 and 3.

Matt was a hobby chicken farmer and worked on a few dairy and crop farms as a teen ager. He has been a welder, forklift mechanic, steel worker, volunteer firefighter and now works as a Mechanic Shop Foreman at Bobcat of CNY. The goal is to have Matt full time on the farm in the future.

They met on a practice rope rescue through their local fire departments in 1992 and married 1 year later.

Their son, Cam (now 15) has restarted the farm's egg enterprise with 28 hens and has 1 pet goose and 3 ducks. He is often found fixing what his mom broke, hiking with his Labrador dog, Sara, building a wind turbine, turning something on his wood lathe, building poultry housing, or riding around the farm in his 1947 Willy's army jeep- with his dog in the passenger seat.

They have 5 dogs and 2 cats.

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