

Bison:

Continued from Page 8

traditionally grazed grasslands in the Great Plains. Garrett said bison would eat some of the grass in an area and then move on, which allows the grass to recover between grazing cycles.

He says the same will happen with his system of moving the bison from field to field.

“They’ll be on fresh ground every day. Their natural tendency is to graze and move,” he says. “You impact it, then leave it alone for awhile.”

Garrett’s goal is to manage the grass in a way that allows grazing clear into December, which means the ranch won’t need as much hay for winter feeding.

As for the cold, well, the bison don’t mind temperatures that often dip below zero in Baker Valley. In fact, they prefer chilly weather.

Garrett provides this fact about hair follicles: bison have 15,000 per square inch, while cattle have 5,000. Denser hair means more insulation.

“They’re built for cold,” he says.

FOWL CONTRIBUTIONS

The chickens will also play a part in Aurora Meadows Ranch’s agricultural practices. The Virtues converted a livestock trailer to serve as a mobile chicken coop, which enables them to pull it to a new pasture to let the birds forage for bugs.

The flock will be moved into a pasture after the bison leave it.

Kerbie says the chickens, by scratching the ground in search of food, disintegrate the bison manure piles, which spreads the natural fertilizer.

“They’re tilling with their claws,” she says.

She said the chickens also eat fly larvae, which means fewer flies to bother the bison.

BISON MEAT

The ranch’s long-term plan is to sell and ship bison meat to consumers around the country.

For now, the meat is available only in Eastern Oregon. The farm offers free delivery within Baker City, or farm pickup for those who live elsewhere.

Cuts can be ordered through the website, www.stellarprovisions.com.

For those who want someone else to do



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Virtue siblings Mack, 4, and Paizley, 6, check on the chicken flock. Behind them is the mobile coop that can move the chickens to different fields.

the cooking, Stellar Provisions ground bison is now served at the Latitude 45 restaurant in Baker City.

Although the bison herd won’t be as visible to the public at the new ranch, the Virtues want to ensure that consumers stay connected to this local source of food.

“People can always reach out if they want to see them,” Kerbie says.

EGGS

With a flock of 300 chickens, Kerbie is gathering around 200 eggs every day.

Eggs can be purchased in several ways. Weekly delivery is available on Tuesdays (\$5 per dozen) either as a one-time purchase or a subscription for regular deliveries.

Customers can also purchase eggs on farm pick up days (\$4.50 per dozen) from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Mondays or 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursdays.

Farm pickup is located at 18632 West Campbell Loop.

Kerbie will also sell eggs by the dozen at the Baker City Farmers Market this summer.

To stay updated, follow Stellar Provisions on Facebook and Instagram, or visit the website, www.stellarprovisions.com.

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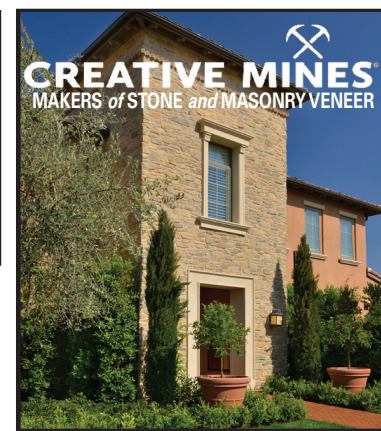
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