


 Two spotted fawns are shown in a field of dry grass. One fawn is in the foreground, looking directly at the camera, while another is slightly behind it to the left. The background is a soft-focus field of tall, dry grass.

VICFA | Voice

Our Mission: *To promote and preserve unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products*

May 2011

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Fallow Farming

By Stanley Holmes

Other than the extra cost of fencing, Fallow Farming is a perfect fit for the small farmer. Domesticated by the Phoenicians around 9 BC, they have been farmed by the Europeans for over 2000 years. Brought to the United States by George Washington, they were raised on his Mount Vernon farm along with his cows, pigs, and various livestock.

Fallows are a domesticated animal and are very efficient grazers that produce a high-yielding carcass. They have the ability to adapt to widely varying climates and are a hardy, disease-free and low-maintenance animal. Fallows have gained popularity as a livestock alternative due to their low aggressiveness, ease of handling and their natural immunity to many diseases. They have low labor requirements, need little feed compared to other livestock and can be successfully raised on a few acres of land. It is estimated that Fallows are three times more profitable than traditional livestock. Fallow venison is recognized as an extra lean red meat with excellent taste and texture; it is considered by many traditionally trained chefs to be one of the finest meat products of any animal flesh available for preparation for the gourmet table. Farmed venison cuts are quite similar to beef cuts. Mild and tender, domestic gourmet venison has less cholesterol than chicken, is lower in fat, calories and cholesterol than beef, pork and lamb. Gourmet chefs have prized this lean meat for centuries, and fallow venison is a European gourmet holiday favorite.

These animals do well in various pasture combinations and are very adaptable. They are also easy on pastures and do not wallow. Unlike other livestock species, they do not pace fence lines, which cause soil erosion problems within enclosures. They are very cautious and tend to flee ahead of anything or anyone following them. This makes them easy to herd and move from one enclosure to another. Once herded into a dimly lighted facility, they become very calm and are easily handled.

Some industry advocates consider fallows as a livestock alternative that has the potential to boost a sagging agricultural economy without the use of subsidies or government incentives. Since fallows naturally consume less fodder than cattle and feed in a manner that is less damaging to pastures, fallow farming can be up to three times as profitable as traditional livestock production. Fallows have rapid maturation rates and can reproduce

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for up to 20 years. Several sources also demonstrate that deer farming can produce a quality herd on very little acreage, usually 20 to 60 acres of land. Fallows can not crossbreed with whitetails and they do not get Chronic Wasting (CWD) a deadly disease similar to Mad Cow that affects whitetails.



It makes you wonder why the state is not full of fallow farms. It must be too good to be true. After learning the advantages of fallow farming, I built a fence, and brought in a buck and three does. Four grew to ten, and I anxiously awaited the arrival of four new fawns this spring.

I was approached by an officer of the DGIF and asked if my deer were Sika, which are on the list of native or naturalized animals. I told him that they were fallow. Months later, the officer returned with his sergeant, who confirmed that the deer were fallow, and told me that I may need a permit.

I called the DGIF and asked about a permit, and was told that the Department of Agriculture controlled all livestock. When I explained that I had fallows, I was referred to the native/naturalized list. Whitetails, Sika, and Elk are on the list, but Fallows are not. I called the Department of Agriculture and told them that I had livestock brought into the state without a permit. I was told that the shipper is responsible for getting a health certificate. They suggested that I have the animals checked by a veterinarian, just in case.

On March 14, 2011, at 8am, fourteen employees of the DGIF came without warning and killed the herd that I had been growing for four years. Just when I was about to see a return on my investment, it was taken away. According the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, it is illegal to own fallows in the State of Virginia without a permit and they are not issuing any. There is one successful fallow farm in Virginia, which is the only one allowed to operate, by the DGIF. How they created this monopoly is anyone's guess.

The State of Pennsylvania has over 700 deer farms, producing more than one hundred million dollars of revenue a year, controlled by their Department of Agriculture.

We need to take the control of Fallow farms from the DGIF, who are unfamiliar with domestic livestock, and put it into the hands of the Department of Agriculture, who deal with livestock everyday. Small farmers are being denied a very profitable use of their resources. ■

the Farmers Market Report Tune In Or Listen Online

Each week, VICFA President, Wayne Bolton hosts a radio program on Friday mornings at 7:45 am. "The Farmers' Market Report", broadcast on WVHL radio, 92.9 FM in Farmville, Virginia, allows Bolton the opportunity to interview individuals from all over the country who are involved in the food movement.

Be sure to listen each week at 92.9 FM (WVHL, Kickin' Country), or listen online directly from our website: www.vicfa.org.

Our website homepage will play the current program automatically (logon to www.vicfa.org with your computer speakers powered on); and you can also access previous Farmers Market Report broadcasts by clicking on the FARMERS MARKET REPORT link on the left side of every page.

These broadcasts offer timely information concerning today's topics that address our food freedoms. The program features diverse perspectives from around the nation. Listen Friday mornings at 7:45 am on 92.9FM or go to www.vicfa.org. ■

Thank You: Dick Stevens

During our April meeting, Dick Stevens presented a very informative workshop, especially educating the younger generation, on many aspects of poultry production.



The successful workshop included live birds to illustrate points that Dick was making, and everyone went home with a handout full of useful information.

We would like to express our gratitude to Dick Stevens for bringing his insight to VICFA's April meeting.

The VICFA Board

If you are interested in becoming a VICFA Board Member, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at: info@vicfa.net

VICFA Notes

Come to Our May Meeting

The May Meeting will be held in Spotsylvania, Virginia, at the home of Suzi Croes.

Come to our meeting on May 8, 2011 at the home of Suzi Croes. Make it a family day! Come join us for a potluck supper, our VICFA meeting and fellowship!

Join us on May 8, 2011. We will share in a potluck lunch at 1:00 pm, followed by our general business meeting from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

Sunday, May 8, 2011
at the home of Suzi Croes
7919 Lake Anna Pkwy
Spotsylvania, VA 22551
(540) 582-3219

FROM THE CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA:

Head northeast on 7th St NE toward Market St E. Take the 1st right onto Market St E. Take the 1st right onto 9th St SE. Continue onto Avon St. Turn left at VA-20 S/Monticello Ave Continue to follow VA-20. Merge onto I-64 E via the ramp to Richmond. Take exit 143 for VA-208 toward Louisa/Ferncliff. Turn left at VA-208 E/Courthouse Rd. Turn right at VA-208 E/VA-22 E/E Main St Continue to follow VA-208 E/VA-22 E. Turn left at E 1st St. Take the 1st left onto US-522 N/VA-208 E/Louisa Ave Continue to follow US-522 N/VA-208 E. Turn right at VA-208 E/New Bridge Rd Continue to follow VA-208 E. Turn right at VA-208 E/Co Rd 606/Courthouse Rd. Turn left at Lake Anna Pkwy Destination will be on the right: 7919 Lake Anna Pkwy Spotsylvania, VA 22551.

FROM THE RICHMOND AREA:

Merge onto VA-195 W Toll road. Continue onto I-195 N. Keep right at the fork, follow signs for I-64 E/I-95/Washington/Norfolk. Keep left at the fork and merge onto I-95 N. Take exit 118 for County Rd 606 toward Thornburg. Turn left at Co Rd 606/Mudd Tavern Rd Continue to follow Co Rd 606. Turn right at Lake Anna Pkwy Destination will be on the right: 7919 Lake Anna Pkwy Spotsylvania, VA 22551.

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VICFA

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Designer: Shannon Sankar

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