

Mr. Mike Goldwasser
Hillsville, VA

Since coming to Virginia and becoming a beef cattle producer Mike Goldwasser has strived to learn how to capture the full benefits of superior management and genetics in his beef herd. He has done this by retaining ownership of his calf crops through harvest since the '80s and then using the performance and carcass information gained to select for genetics that improve quality grade and yield. Mike's operation now primarily consists of stockering lightweight heifers and retaining ownership through the finishing phase. Mike even went a step further in the effort to capture the value of his cattle by entering the branded-beef market.

Utilizing the extensive history of carcass data and feedyard information, along with a desire to add further value to their cattle, Mike organized a partnership with four other like-minded cattlemen to create Blue Ridge Premium Beef LLC. The entity marketed a high-quality, grain fed branded beef product. All cattle were bred, fed and processed in Virginia. All cattle in the program were source-verified and fed without growth implants. Carcasses were "tendercut," aged 21 days, and sold frozen in cryovac packages. The branded beef product was marketed direct to consumers, retailers and restaurants in VA and marketed over the internet throughout the Eastern U.S. Although this venture has since ended, Mike has learned many lessons about direct-marketing which he shares with others to help them in this business.

Mike has practiced rotational and intensive grazing, as well as positive conservation practices, for more than 15 years. He says one of their greatest assets is the value of the superior forage available in Southwest Virginia. Cool-season grasses are utilized extensively in the rotation, as is stockpiled fescue. Records of carrying capacity, number of feeding days vs. grazing days, grass yield and rest periods between grazing rotations are used to adjust and make improvements to the system. Grazing management is a key component to the approximately 500 stocker calves developed each year. Multiple paddocks are valuable for herd health during times of purchasing stockers; as they allow smaller groups to be isolated and monitored.

Mike has been a leader in Virginia and nationally through his involvement in agricultural organizations and has been recognized for his outstanding management, conservation practices and leadership with many awards over the years. He is a past Virginia representative on the National Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association.