

## ***Our History and the People***

Sparlyn Organic Farm is a third generation mixed organic farm.

Originally it was a cereal crop and commercial cattle farm. In the early 1960's Charolais cattle joined the farm. Then it became a combination cereal and purebred Charolais ranch. The herd grew to almost 150 cows. In 1987 Craig purchased the farm from his father. Additional land was rented to double the seeded acres to 1800. Hired people became hard to find and the farming industry changed. The rented land was given up as the hired people came and went. In 2001 the decision was made to go organic. Not only was it a financial decision but a lifestyle decision. With four young children and no hired help there was no time for family. The burden of chemical and fertilizer bills had worn us out. We began our holistic life style. We are certified with OCIA (Organic Crop Improvement Association), IFOAM accredited, NOP (National Organic Program), Bio Swiss approved equivalency to EU2092/91. In 2003 the cattle became certified as well. Farming organic has become who we are.

The farm is operated by Craig, Marilyn and our four children, Miranda, Chase, Carlin and Jaden. All of the family drives machinery works with the cattle and cooks too. We each have our activities which include 4-H, hockey, dance and as much camping as we can manage.



New trees for the future

## ***The Crops***

Our farm has 950 seeded acres and about 800 acres of native grass and pasture.

We seed wheat, barley, oats, peas, flax, hemp and alfalfa. We strive for a crop rotation using a cereal, legume, cereal under seeded to clover or an oilseed, and clover silage or plough down. Alfalfa is included as conditions permit.

Our main source of fertilizer is manure, both cattle and chicken. Our organic straw is used for the bedding of the chickens and makes the manure easier to handle. Both manures are spread in early spring or late fall after combining. Another fertilizer is plow down crop after silage has been completed. Depending on the crop year we average 100 acres of silage a year.

Part of the cereal crops are used for swath grazing as well as cash crops.

In 2002-2003 we planted 5 miles of trees. We used a mixture of lilac, caragana, green ash, chokecherry, Colorado spruce and Scotch pine. The trees will serve as our buffer from our non-organic neighbors as well as attract birds.

Organic farming definitely has all six of us busy during seeding, haying and combining. But when the kids come in from the field and comment on how many birds there were following them we know this is how it was meant to be.



Pasture for the girls to roam.

## *The Cattle*

We started with too many cows, increased the herd some more and then came to our senses with 70 cows. The very hard decision to quit the purebred business was made in 2003.

The main cow herd is still purebred but the girls now enjoy the company of a Red Angus bull as well. Many of our calves are Char/Red Angus crosses. Our heifers remain with us to replace the older girls. The only additions are bulls for breeding purposes.

The herd goes out to pasture as soon as the seeding is complete and returns home late in the fall. A good portion of the herd spends the winter swath grazing or grazing stockpiled grass close to the yard. Silage, hay and barley are also fed on a daily basis.

To date we have not had many health problems in our herd. Diatomaceous earth is used for lice. Mineral is fed free choice. Screenings are also fed or mixed in with the feed.

You may hear some baaing and yes we have a few sheep but these are only a result of a favorite 4-H project we just can't get rid of.

The horses are too old to ride although they would love to die trying to chase those cows one more time. They too are from Pony Club years.

And the *furious* dog is our adopted love from the SPCA.



3 of our 4 children at the local 4-H Achievement Day



**We should still be this young**

**Craig, Marilyn  
Miranda, Chase, Carlin & Jaden  
Vanscoy, Saskatchewan**