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We are
passionate
about our
commitment
to the land

Rainer Krumsiek

BIG BEAR RANCH

RAINER & GIGI KRUMSIEK Horsefly, BC

*Story by Alana Groeneveld
Photos by Krumsiek Family*

Big Bear Ranch is owned and managed by Rainer and Gigi Krumsiek. The couple, along with their three children, immigrated from Germany in 1993 to British Columbia where they soon found the perfect place to fulfill their dream of living from the land - Big Bear Ranch. The ranch is located just minutes from Horsefly, BC (75 km east of Williams Lake) in the foothills of the beautiful Cariboo Mountains with hundreds of lakes and streams in the surrounding area.

Environmental sustainability is a priority at Big Bear Ranch. Through environmentally sound and organic management practices the ranch is achieving their goals of: enabling healthy, fertile soil to grow a diversity of plants; raising livestock in a sustainable and profitable manner; and producing wholesome, great tasting meat.

THE LAND

The 2,300 acre biodynamic family farm is a mixture of pasture and forest. Approximately 46% of the land is cleared and cultivated and 49% is uncultivated, selectively logged forest at various stages of regeneration. Ponds and riparian areas represent the remaining 5% of the property. The wetland and riparian features are distributed over the entire ranch and have significant value given their proximity to the combination of open and forested habitats. The unique mixture of ranchlands create habitat for a wide range of diverse plant and wildlife species.

"We are passionate about our commitment to the land," says Rainer Krumsiek, "our objective is to protect fish and wildlife

habitat, water quality, soil life and tree stands through proper management."

DIVERSIFICATION

Big Bear Ranch is home to a variety of livestock:

- A beef cattle herd is made up primarily of Hereford Angus cross cows with an increasing Galloway influence. Yearlings are retained and finished on grass to supply beef for their organic, grass-fed beef market.
- Free-range pigs enjoy making their own nests and sleeping under the trees within the confines of the electrified pastures. Pigs are born in spring and summer, raised until 8 to 12 months and then processed at 250 - 300 lbs.
- A herd of Icelandic horses are bred and trained for pleasure use and as trail horses.
- Sheep are also raised to produce meat for the certified organic lamb market.
- Laying hens, meat chickens and turkeys act as nature's bug and fly eliminators.
- Bees add to the biodiversity and provide healthy honey.

Farm diversification has involved custom grazing organic dairy replacements, breeding Icelandic horses and direct marketing organic meat products. In 2004 Big Bear Ranch became an approved Certified Organic ranch. The Krumsiek's have their own certified organic cattle, sheep and free range pigs and they grow their own hay to supply their organic feed requirement.

Big Bear Ranch's website provides a venue for customers to learn about the ranch, their products and order directly online. www.bigbearranch.com

GRAZING MANAGEMENT

The previous owner logged the land and pushed the stumps, logging debris and rocks into 10-30m wide windrows. Contrary to common practices, the Krumsiek's kept the windrows. Fencing them within the cultivated landscape has resulted in natural shelterbelts that create habitat structures and improve biodiversity within the area. The natural windbreaks reduce thermal heat loss in animals reducing winter feed costs. They also diminish the drying effect of winds in the summer, allow for retention of snow cover and subsequent slower run-off in the spring which increases the moisture holding capacity of the ground resulting in improved forage production.

The ranch has invested in a very extensive fencing project including 70 km of permanent electric fence and 13 km of barbed wire to manage grazing. The electric fence is used to manage the open pastures and grazing of the habitat areas amongst the windrows. Mob grazing has been implemented to achieve non-selective utilization and to generate the herd effect for healthy soils and plant regeneration. A 90-300 day rest period has been implemented since 2009 and is already showing remarkable results.



Aerial view of the fields at the ranch. Logging debris piles act as natural windbreaks.



Icelandic horses are bred and trained for pleasure use and trail riding.

WATER & RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

The ranch has invested in a frost proof, piped water distribution system to facilitate the management of numerous pastures and limit livestock access to riparian areas. Wetlands have been fenced out for waterfowl habitat and water quality protection; but are still grazed to appropriate levels at specific times of the year. The water distribution system eliminates the need for livestock access to riparian and aquatic areas for watering.

"We are pleased with the results of our water and fencing projects," says Gigi Krumsiek, "they have helped protect sensitive riparian habitats and water resources located throughout our ranch."

It also facilitates their grazing and pasture management which in-turn retains and enhances habitat for a wide diversity of species from songbirds to mule deer and waterfowl.

IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Big Bear Ranch continues to look for ways to enhance their management practices that will have a positive affect on the environment, the wildlife habitat on the ranch and the conditions in which livestock are raised. By maintaining the focus of working with Mother Nature to achieve their goals Big Bear Ranch is building a partnership with the environment in the production of wholesome beef.

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Wetlands have been fenced to protect waterfowl habitat and water quality.

A frost-proof, piped water system has been installed (inset).



Wildlife at the ranch. Snowy owl, mule deer, deer in the fields, and a pair of pileated woodpeckers.



THANK YOU FROM RAINER & GIGI

We really appreciate the recognition of our fellow ranchers and the BCCA for our stewardship practices for the land and for increasing biodiversity. Our efforts since we bought the place in 1995 to protect the environment were always with the sole intention to increase ecological and economical stability of the ranch.

To receive this award was a great surprise to us! The efforts of the BCCA to have ranchers recognized as good stewards of the land will be known to an even wider public through Big Bear Ranch's membership in a wide range of associations like The Land Conservancy, FarmFolk CityFolk, Grasslands Conservation Council and hundreds of direct meat customers in BC.

We thank our local ranchers Doug and Wendy Best for nominating us. We specially thank BMO, BCWF, BCIDF, BCCA and PrairieCoast Equipment for sponsoring this award.



K McKean

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The Environmental Stewardship Award has been made possible by the generous support of our sponsors.

Photo L-R: Rainer & Gigi Krumsiek, Ron Buchanan & Martin Rossmann (BCCA), Doug Haughton & Dale Poncelet (PrairieCoast), Bob Mitchell (BMO) and Mel Arnould (BCWF).



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