



#FridaysOnTheFarm: Fulfilling a Dream

Each Friday, visit local farms, ranches, forests, and resource areas through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Meet farmers, producers, and landowners who are working to improve their operations with USDA programs.

This Friday meet Martha Neale, of Windmist Farm in Jamestown, Rhode Island. Martha operates the farm with her husband, George, raising beef cattle, goats, sheep, pastured pork, and layer hens. The land has been in their family since the early 1960s.

Farmland Forever

With its herd of Belted Galloway cattle often seen grazing in the shadow of the Newport Bridge, Windmist Farm is perhaps the most visible of the farms in Jamestown. The town sits on Conanicut Island in Narragansett Bay, a steppingstone for tourists on their way to nearby Newport. The Neales inherited the farm from George's father in the early 2000s.

"We raise most of our own livestock and sell from the farm, at farmers markets and a little bit of wholesale," Martha said. "We started raising Belted Galloway cattle in the early 90s because we liked the looks of them. People enjoy driving by and seeing the 'Oreo cows' on pasture, which we enjoy, too."

In 2007, the 44-acre scenic parcel was preserved as farmland forever, thanks to the efforts of the people of Jamestown, who floated a bond to help with the purchase, as well as the State of Rhode Island, USDA's [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), the Champlin Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy.

"Jamestown is a pretty wealthy community, so it certainly helps my business, but the community also feels very strongly about its conservation ethic," Martha said.

Living the Dream

"As a result of conserving the farm, we decided to really go into farming and fulfill my dream of being a farmer," said Martha. "I was in my fifties by the time I really started farming. Since then, we have been able to do a lot of conservation practices that we believe very strongly in."

Windmist Farm borders a salt marsh. With Jamestown being on a sole source aquifer, protecting groundwater is crucial.

"We have to be very conscious of where our manure runoff goes," said Martha.

The Neales work with NRCS to strengthen their conservation efforts through the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) and [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#).



With the help of NRCS, Windmist Farm has implemented conservation practices, which include a riparian buffer to protect the salt marsh, a rotational grazing system for livestock, reduced tillage, split nitrogen application, and pollinator habitat seeding. They have extended their season with a high tunnel and plan to install a second one.

Building Demand

Local arborists often give the Neales free wood chips, which they use for livestock bedding. The wood chips are composted to help sequester carbon in the soil.

“I can’t tell you how great that’s been,” said Martha. “In the wintertime, we can bed the cows down on the wood chips and that keeps them out of the mud.”

The Neales also have mobile chicken coops that allow the birds to be outside and spread their manure around the field.

“I guess a lot of it is just not doing any harm and leaving the land so that it can go back to its natural cycle when we’re gone,” said Martha.

Martha and George welcome visitors on Windmist Farm to learn more about how they operate.

“I think it’s very important that they get an idea of what it takes to put it all in the freezer,” said Martha. “The only reason that we’ve been able to make this work is because I have built up a customer demand among people who are worried about where their food comes from.”

More Information

USDA offers a variety of risk management, disaster assistance, loan, and conservation programs to help agricultural producers in the United States weather ups and downs in the market and recover from natural disasters as well as invest in improvements to their operations. [Learn about additional programs.](#)

For more information about USDA programs and services, [contact your local USDA service center.](#)

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