

F E R G U S

FEATURES

Member Newsletter ♦ Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. , Lewistown, MT

Runamuk Guest Ranch focuses on an authentic ranch experience for their guests

Story by Judy Byrne

Make no mistake. Runamuk Guest Ranch is a fully operational working ranch raising horses and Black Angus cattle.

Formerly known as the Spidel Ranch, Runamuk has been a family business for five generations, ever since Bill Spidel partnered with A.B. LaMott in 1903.

Through the decades, cowhands have worked the herds among the mountain meadows, pine tree forests, and sandstone rimrocks that make up the Bull Mountain range.

Today, however, wranglers are likely to be riding the trails and moving cattle as part of their vacation experience. In addition to the commercial cattle and horse operation, Runamuk welcomes guests from around the world and offers an opportunity to participate in an authentic ranching experience.

Guests are not required to move cattle, fix fences, or check the water lines and feed, of course. They can participate in as much or as little ranch work as they choose.

Some prefer to relax in the guest-house or on the patio with a good book. Others like to rough it in the primitive homestead cabin.

Although Runamuk Guest Ranch



While Jody Dahl and her husband, Toby, focus on riding and working with stock, they also bring in therapists and instructors for massages and yoga. Jody handles most of the cooking which consists of old ranch style with modern flavors.

Photo courtesy Runamuk Guest Ranch.

focuses on riding and working with stock, guests might merely rent the lodgings and entertain themselves in this unspoiled setting.

Toby and Jody Dahl are the driving force behind Runamuk Guest Ranch. "It was Toby's idea," Jody explains. "He thought this would make an awesome guest ranch, but he didn't know how to make it happen."

Not one to sit and wait for things to happen, Jody tackled the project enthusiastically. They approached the family, including Toby's parents, Rod and Susan, and started from there. Jody threw herself into expanding the scope of the ranch. She devoted all of one fall and winter to marketing the guest ranch. In the summer of 2004, Runamuk welcomed its first guests.

Limiting the number of guests each week makes visitors feel like part of the family, and this intimacy attracts an international crowd.

They come from places like England, Germany, Ireland, Scandinavia, Italy and Australia.

One of those guests was Kate Matheson, formerly a photo editor for Glamour magazine in the United Kingdom. Kate had a truly life-changing vacation at Runamuk five years ago. She so enjoyed her stay that she quit her job at Glamour

and began working for Runamuk instead.

The freedom to ride horseback over 18,000 acres of unmarked private land, the opportunity to experience real ranch life, or the possibility of learning to drive a horse-drawn wagon draws visitors. But Toby and Jody also pamper their guests with full body massages, yoga, and unparalleled dining and wines.

While they bring in therapists and instructors for the massages and yoga, Jody handles most of the cooking. "We believe good food is one of the greater pleasures in life; your bellies will not go without," she promises.

Meals at Runamuk consist of ranch-

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

From Scott Sweeney

Computer conversion

The co-op is in the midst of a computer software conversion. The upgrade will be administered through National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) of Mandan, N.D., and St. Louis, Missouri. This will provide improvements on our electric billing, engineering, mapping, capital credits and basically all aspects of computer programs for the cooperative.

Periodically, computer software needs upgrading. Our existing software dates back to 1991. In approximately six months, statements will be printed and mailed from St. Louis.

This will provide the cooperative with a significant savings by no longer owning, maintaining and supplying the labor for printing, stuffing and mailing the monthly bills. The new software also allows members the option of having their statements emailed to them – saving paper and postage.

FEMA

The staff has been working fast and furious with FEMA officials to get the paperwork submitted for flooding and hill slide damages resulting from all the rain our area received in May and June. Our engineers estimated an approximate total of one-half million dollars in four primary counties – Musselshell, Fergus, Judith Basin and Petroleum.

There are 15 different lines that still need work – primarily reroute power lines because of slide or washed out areas along the Musselshell and Judith Rivers. The co-op will be working this fall to complete as many of these projects as possible. Most likely some will not be finished until next summer. FEMA will allow 18 months to complete the work.

Many members have mailed thank-you cards or called the co-op to express their appreciation for the work the line crews did to restore power and keep the lights on during all the flooding. I also

want to thank our line crews and staff for their dedication and many hours of hard work this spring and summer. I am very proud of all of them.

New billing dates

Presently, the Turtle® meter readings are being read on the 25th of the month and the bills are mailed so that members receive them on the first of the month. We are planning to shift the date meters are read to the first day of the month so the member's power bills coincide with the wholesale power bill the co-op pays each month. We will mail the billing statements to the members several days later. The due date will also be adjusted, allowing 15 days for payment.

I wish to thank all members involved with this change.

Highwood Generating Station

Phase 1 of the Highwood Generating Station (HGS) is completed. NorthWestern Energy finished the substation to tie the power station into their transmission system in mid August and the 230 KV transmission line and two substations were energized. In mid September, a ground breaking ceremony took place. The first phase of HGS is now operational. This is a major accomplishment for our power supplier – Southern Montana Electric G & T.

TIMELY TOPICS



Vangie McConnell, Editor

Building a better world

How do you build a better world? In today's uncertain economic times that question quickly comes to mind. We want our children and neighbors to succeed. We need a strong and sustainable community.

History tells us when we band together we can do anything. Together, we can build a better world. That's where cooperatives come into play.

International Year of the Cooperative

This month we kick off a year-long celebration marking the International Year of Cooperatives 2012. Our theme, "Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World," resonates loud and clear in our turbulent national and global economy. The year offers a chance for us to showcase our legacy of innova-

tion and achievement, and reminds us of what's important in business – putting people first.

As a member of Fergus Electric Cooperative, you know we're focused on providing safe, reliable, and affordable power. But this community-driven effort doesn't stop at your light switch. There are 29,200 co-ops across America taking many forms, from farmers banding together to get a fair price on supplies to credit unions, small business owners, grocery stores, insurance, housing and child care.

Co-ops share principles and values

One out of every four Americans is a co-op member; there are more than 1 billion members around the world. Co-ops share a common set of principles and values, including self-help and democracy.

Electric cooperatives may only serve 12 percent of Americans, but our lines cover 75 percent of this great nation. By banding together, we deliver power to 42 million rural Americans in 47 states – and we're not finished.

Through NRECA International Programs, co-op linemen are volunteering overseas to deliver electricity to 2 billion people living without power.

Over the last 50 years, these efforts have provided light and hope to 100 million people in more than 40 countries. That's how electric cooperatives build a better world.

Cp-ops put people first

During International Year of Cooperatives 2012, it's important to remember co-ops put people first. We brought electricity to this area to improve the quality of life. We want our children to succeed. That's why we support the Youth to Washington essay contest and tour. Last summer Montana sent 24 high school seniors-to-be to our nation's capital to learn about leadership, teamwork, and our nation's ideals. Our co-op also provided seven \$600 scholarships to further local students' education.

At Fergus Electric, innovation takes many forms, from energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts to owning our own generation – Highwood Generation Station. Each innovative step forward builds a better community for all of us.

By putting people first and innovating to meet member needs, cooperative enterprises build a better world. To learn more, visit www.go.coop.

Runamuk Guest Ranch

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Top L to R: The Dahls – Toby, Jody, Brigem (10), Chyna (2) and Colton (5) make visitors feel like part of the family. Wranglers ride the trails and move cattle as part of the vacation experience. Guests may participate in as much or as little ranch work as they choose.



Bottom L to R: The freedom to ride horseback over 18,000 acres of private land draws visitors from around the world. Runamuk is listed in Top 50 Ranches.

Photos courtesy Runamuk Guest Ranch.

raised beef, homegrown vegetables, fresh-baked breads, and homemade desserts. Although guests are asked to provide their own liquors, Runamuk also serves Montana wines from the Mission Mountain Winery near Flathead, among the finest in the world. “What we do here as far as food goes is mesh the old ranch style with new and more modern flavors,” Jody says. “What you get is Old Western hospitality.”

Kerry Lambert, supervising producer of *The Secret Life of Cowboy Food* of the Food Network, visited Runamuk to film a segment of the show. She gave Jody’s meal a glowing review. “I have traveled to some of the finest resorts and restaurants in the world, and Jody’s skill in the kitchen rivals some of the best-trained chefs,” she wrote.

When day is done and stars light the sky, guests might pass the evening hours singing around a campfire, joining in a lively hoedown, or simply talking with their hosts under the big Montana sky.

Over the years in conversation with hundreds of guests, Jody recognized something lacking in the guest ranch realm. “The Internet is an explosion of everything that’s available,” she says. “But consumers don’t know how to choose which ranch to visit or whom they can trust.” Determined to fill a very real need, Jody has launched a new venture: *Top50Ranches.com*. “We list the top 50 guest ranches from all over the world to help people find their ideal vacation,” she says.

Jody or one of her wranglers visits every ranch that applies for inclusion and ranks it according to strict criteria. First and most important is its hospitality. “Guests can overlook a lot of little discomforts if the ranch has great hospitality,” she says.

Next among the criteria are the types of riding opportunities available. Jody also considers features such as the food, accommodations and ambience in her decision-making. Inclusion in Top 50 Ranches requires that the guest ranch provide whatever their advertising promises. “We look for places going above and beyond, so guests are assured they will have a quality stay.”

Runamuk is listed among those top 50. This year, all of Jody and Toby’s bookings have come through Top 50 Ranches, and guests are finding their stay exactly as they hoped. Gene Mauldin of North Carolina says of Runamuk, “You don’t provide just a place to vacation; you provide a retreat to renew the mind and soul and create a lifetime of memories.”

Melanie Rutherford visited two years ago. Like Kate Matheson, this former editor of *Horse and Rider Magazine* in the U.K. decided to remain at Runamuk. Now she works for Top 50 Ranches.

A visit to Runamuk can be life changing, as it was for Melanie and Kate. At the very least, Top 50 Ranches and Runamuk can make vacation dreams come true.

Write an essay:

WIN A TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Plans are underway for the 2012 Youth to Washington Tour and Essay Contest. The tour is scheduled for June 16-22, 2012. Airfare from Great Falls to Washington, D.C., is paid along with lodging, meals and admission to events. Contest rules are:

The Student must be a junior or senior in high school in the fall of 2012.

The student cannot be a prior winner of the youth tour.

The student and/or parent or guardian must be served by Fergus Electric Cooperative.

The student must write an essay of 500 words or less (double spaced) on the topic: *Without electricity, how would your day-to-day life be different?*

Submit entries to Youth Tour Essay Contest, Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 U.S. Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457, postmarked no later than Nov. 30, 2011.

Essays should include a cover page with the student's name, address, telephone number and the cooperative's name.

An application form must accompany the essay. Please call 538-3465 for the form. It is also available on the MECA website at www.mtco-opts.com. Click on the "Youth" tab, and then choose "application" from the left menu.

Student essayists are encouraged to be creative with their ideas. Imagine a weeklong power outage in your neighborhood or interview someone who remembers life before electricity.

Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association in Great Falls selects a state winner and Fergus Electric also sponsors a student. For additional information, contact Vangie or Jill at 538-3465.

\$50 electric credit drawing

Help celebrate co-op month! Complete this form and return it to Fergus Electric Cooperative, 84423 US Highway 87, Lewistown, MT 59457 by October 31.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Your name will be placed in a drawing for an electric credit of \$50. The winner will be contacted in November.

**LOCAL
TRUSTED.
SERVING
YOU.**

October is Co-op Month

Have a fun and safe Halloween

Riley Obert, daughter of staking engineer Monte Obert, shares these Halloween safety reminders.

- Watch for children on roadways, medians and curbs.
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys carefully.
- Make sure an adult or responsible teenager supervises the outing for younger children.
- Use costumes that are light-colored and fire retardant.
- Insist that children travel only in familiar areas and along an established route. Think "safe and sensible" on this special day.



Identify account number

Win a \$32.50 credit

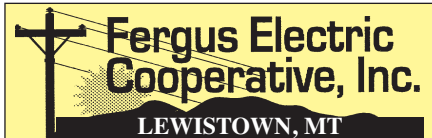
If one of the following account numbers is yours, call Fergus Electric (406-538-3465) and identify yourself and your account number.

Account 392250

Account 142370

Account 348185

You will receive a \$32.50 credit on next month's statement.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

FOR OUTAGES

First: Check the fuses or breakers in the building in which the electricity is off.

Second: Check the breaker below the meter.

Third: If electricity is still out, call a neighbor to see if they have electricity.

Fourth: Call 406-538-3465 day or night or:

Dale Rikala406-535-5192
Guy Johnson.....406-535-5132
Scott Sweeney406-538-7218
Don Criswell (Roundup)406-323-3426
Monte Obert406-425-1288

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