

## LIFE 2009 Sarman Ranch Day Tour

Tuesday, August 4, 2009, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, Pleasant Valley, NV

### Presenters and Staff:

Ed, Paul, and Mike Sarman, ranch owners, Chuck Petersen, NRCS rangeland specialist, Janet Petersen, local historian, Ron Torrel, UNR Cooperative Extension, livestock specialist, Tracy Ryan, Great Basin College, Agriculture Director, Guy Vega and daughters, working cowboy, Simone Zaga and Leta Collord, with the Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group.

This is the third year that Lee Livestock has hosted the Lamoille Institute For Educators (LIFE) ranch day tour. We had our largest group yet, with 61 educators and Sierra Nevada Journey's counselors in attendance. This was also a first in that we had 14 youngsters ranging from ages 6-14. A special hour session with the children was spent in making butter, discussions about activities homestead children might have found, and inspecting the four-hole outhouse that was used by the early family that settled the ranch property. Everyone succeeded in shaking their whipping cream into mellow balls of butter, and enjoyed the fresh taste of their butter on saltine crackers.

The morning opened with Chuck asking for introductions, followed by the Sarman family speaking to their operation and taking questions. Jan lead us through the history of Pleasant Valley, and the Lamoille region. The group began a list of questions and impressions about ranching life, livestock production, and environmental inquiries. This was completed at the wrap-up and is included as notes from the tour day.

Ron and Tracy lead an hour-long excursion and discussion into the meadow adjoining the homestead grounds. Ron speaks passionately about his specialty of Grass Conversion, and the importance of livestock production to Elko County and beyond. Ron points out the importance of recognizing that Nevada is 87% public lands, and how

that affects livestock production. Tracy brought focus to the interactions of wildlife and livestock working lands. Speaking to the importance of retaining open space for migratory purposes, biodiversity needs, clean-air and water, and the aesthetics of working landscapes.

The group was treated to a presentation by working cowboy, Guy Vega, and his two daughters Leddy and Ruthie. He spoke to cowboy gear, the importance of different saddle styles, bits, and head gear. He shared what he does as a day-worker cowboy or buckaroo, as they prefer to call themselves in northeastern Nevada. His girls are his partners during the summer season.

These are the summary notes and observations of the 2009 tour discussions:

- Is the green we see natural or irrigated lands?
- I want to hear about wildlife.
- Interested in mining and ranching interactions.
- Weeds were discussed extensively, weed strategies for education and control, and public involvement
- The influence of NV's public land on issues and management, policies and legislation
- Production of food from organic sources and commercial production. What are the benefits, scale of production, emerging markets
- Open space and ecological systems
- New observation: how cattle are used to harness the energy from the sun, grass into food for folks
- How does the whole meat industry work? Cows and feed-lots. (In Idaho they use potato waste for feed) Harvest facilities and the limiting factors in utilizing smaller scale operations. Scale of production and consistency of animals for processing, are problems. What to do with the Off-cuts? Tongue, tripe, entrails, tail, other less desirable parts but everything is sold in quantity in large packing houses.
- Why can't we eat more locally/ eat grass fed beef? Have sustainable systems here in Nevada.

- How subsidies affect agriculture: corn, milk, other. How do subsidies work? (over built baseline businesses under subsidies, leads to false production standards and expectations, which often lead to business failure, false pricing of products, inflated prices.)