

Alger Ranch

The Alger Ranch has a long history. Jess Alger's great uncles bought what they call the "home place" around 1917. His dad bought it after returning from W.W.II in 1946, and Jess bought it in 1981. He became certified organic in 2000.

Located on the rolling native grass prairies of central Montana, Jess is proud that his operation has only had one month in the last four years where he had to pay an electrical bill other than the rent on the net meter. In 2003 he put in a wind generator that supplies 99% of the ranch's electricity. "I have one well a mile away that is not on the system."

In addition to raising cattle, Jess grows spring wheat, barley, buff oats (hull-less oats) peas, fall seeded lentils, winter wheat, and alfalfa hay. He also likes to experiment with other crops for soil enrichment and minimum till, and variety for the cows to munch on.

Jess fosters sustainable agricultural practices by using summer interns, and hiring local kids to help with the chores. Although a man of few words, he's known for his "Algerisms":

"It's important where your food comes from. We do not implant our calves because we do not want to eat beef with implants. Why sell it to someone else?"

"People say 'Have a nice weekend'. But with calving, seeding, haying, and harvest time, weekends are something you hope it rains so you can take a little time off. When it does rain, you can catch up on the books. Vacations are basically unheard of around this outfit."

"If you live on a gravel road, life is usually better."