

Keel Ranch

Located on the rolling plains east of the Rocky Mountains in Montana, the Keel Ranch has been in the family for about 75 years. Terry was raised on the farm but left to go to school, joined the Navy, then taught school and worked construction. He returned to the farm in 1981 and has operated it with the help of his son and two daughters until they left to go to school. He's been the only hand on the place for the last ten years with some occasional help from family members.

Terry grows winter wheat, forage peas with barley for hay, and summer fallow between the hay crop and winter wheat. His hay crop is used entirely by his own livestock. He began seriously implementing sustainable agriculture techniques when he made this observation: "I started raising peas and barley a dozen years ago and found that I no longer had to fertilize, and noticed I didn't have to spray any longer." His cattle always show the benefit of healthy nutrition and sound ranch management. "My son, Rhad, came home from college in Bozeman and told me I was farming organically and I should get certified organic. That was in 2000," he says.

Terry looks forward to becoming "occasional" help himself when his son, Rhad, will take over the operation in the next couple of years, hopefully, to continue the Keel Ranch for another 75 years.