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CAA Market: Mystic Hills Farmstead produces high quality food while taking good care of the land

News [FOLLOW NEWS](#) | December 14, 2021

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Mystic Hills Farm offers meat, eggs, vegetables and more through the CAA Market or at CAAMarket.org.

Courtesy photo

Just south of Clark sits acres of rolling hills and snow-covered hay fields that were once known as Mystic, Colorado. What was a bustling settlement is now home to Mystic Hills Farmstead.

Owners Mikinzie and Jack Taylor work tirelessly to provide our community with high quality, sustainably raised meat and vegetables. Mikinzie began her career in farming in 2016, but agriculture has been in her family for generations. She had always dreamed of a career that allowed her to work outside, and shortly after interning at a farm in Boulder, Mikinzie's dream came true in Mystic.

Why did they choose farming? At the core, they wanted to provide themselves and their son clean, healthy food at every meal — food they would be proud to eat. They farm on 400 acres of conserved land, raising sheep, poultry, duck and chicken eggs, pigs and a variety of vegetables.

They've dedicated this land and their lives to providing the Yampa Valley with high quality local food. Mikinzie and Jack recognize that the land, animals and themselves must work together to achieve their goals.

This is why they practice intensive rotational grazing of their sheep and pigs and raise free range chickens. Moving the animals daily allows them to eat a variety of grasses and ensures they're as healthy as possible.

Additionally, rotational grazing gives the land the opportunity to rest and regenerate. Generally, 60 days go by before sheep graze the same area again, and sometimes, it isn't grazed again until the following year. The abundance of grass and insects that the animals eat truly make a difference in the nutritional value and taste of Mystic Hills lamb, poultry, pork and eggs.

While Mystic Hills Farmstead will always remain a small, family-owned and community-driven operation, Mikinzie and Jack are hoping to grow their small flock to about 150 ewes in the next couple of years, allowing them to feed even more people. Like anyone in agriculture, water is, and will continue to be, the biggest challenge they face.

While they can't control mother nature, intentional and smart practices remain the root of their success. Other challenges, such as predators, animal health and well-being, and growing vegetables at high altitude, keep Mikinzie and Jack plenty busy. Sheep dogs, strong infrastructure and careful monitoring help them manage these challenges.

Though farming is difficult work, Mikinzie and Jack have so much to be grateful for. Jack loves the baby animals and working hard to preserve the land. Mikinzie loves working for herself, raising her family on the farm and having the opportunity to feed the community.

Mystic Hills Farmstead's meat, eggs and vegetables can be purchased at the CAA Market (743 Oak St., CAAMarket.org), directly through their website and soon in local restaurants. We challenge you to reconnect with your food and the community by supporting local producers like Mystic Hills.

For more information on Mystic Hills Farmstead and the beautiful family operating it, check out Mikinzie's Farm Journal on their website at MysticHillsFarmStead.com.

Katie Stanhope is a CAA Market Associate.

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