

LAMORINDA WEEKLY



Wednesday, March 5, 2008 ■ Volume 01; Issue 28 ■ www.lamorindaweekly.com

Mooo-ving Away! Hunter Holding Moves His Cows Out of Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Black Angus cows, typical in Lamorinda

Photo Andy Scheck

After years of ranching in Lafayette, the Holding Farm is headed north in search of greener pastures. Holding is the only local rancher currently selling grass fed beef at the Farmers' Markets. Wanting to grow their

herd, the Holdings decided they would have a better opportunity 280 miles north, in Montague, California.

"Land availability in the Bay Area is limited," explains Holding, "our herd grazes on

leased properties most of the time, it is scattered, hilly and not green enough in summer for the type of raising we are doing." Holding Farm beef is not only grass fed, it is "grass finished," meaning that the cows spend their entire life in the fields, are never sent to feed farms and never get the hormones and antibiotics that are typical of beef cattle ranches.

The cows will board trailers in May to move to the new Holding estate. Their new home comprises 500 acres of irrigated land. The town of Montague is close to Lake Shastina, in an irrigation district. In summer the canals fed by the lake are opened to flood the fields, so they stay green.

Holding owns 50 head at this time, but he and his wife Anne plan to grow the herd to 150-200. His practices will not change; his

cows will continue to roam the fields, and Holding "will continue to have the animals butchered at the same small facility, in the most humane way possible," he says.

Holding promises that the Orinda and Moraga Farmers' Markets will continue to be supplied with his meat, although the familiar faces of Anne and Hunter Holding themselves may be replaced by others at the Holding booth. The larger farm will allow Holding to pursue other distribution channels as well, such as specialty stores, mail order and restaurants.

The Holdings will not forget the Bay Area, saying, "We lived for more than 17 years in Lafayette, we raised both our kids here and we have many friends. We're optimistic. This is a new exciting phase in our lives."