

## Living in Harmony With the Land

Through the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, Dr. Jeff Crosier received financial and technical assistance to establish fencing, pipelines, heavy use area protection pads, and watering facilities; accomplish pasture and hay land planting (interseeding legumes and pollinator species), and nutrient management; and construct a seasonal high tunnel and heavy use area winter feeding pad.



NRCS District Conservationist Bart Devillier with Organic Farmer Dr. Jess Crosier.

*"There is a companionship. They all know where to go... it is like a well regulated highway."*

Because Dr. Crosier wanted to take his operation a step further and improve existing conservation practices, he applied and was approved to receive additional financial assistance through the **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**.

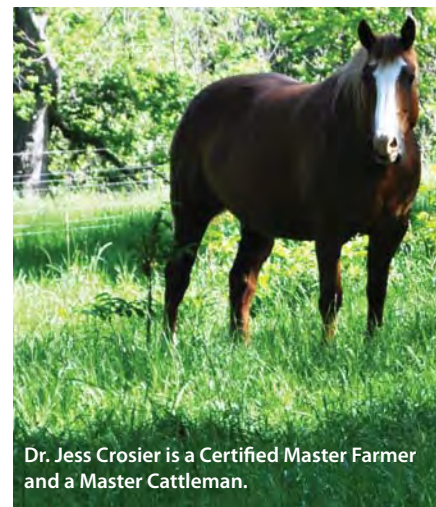
Dr. Jess Crosier, like most other livestock producers in the deep south, operates a small farm. His path to farming success has been a long journey filled with experiences on his farm, visits to other similar operations in the area, attendance at many grazing workshops, tours, field days, and multiple consultations with those that supply technical support.



For more information on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, or the Organic Initiative, contact your local NRCS office. Contact information is included on the back page of this publication.

Organic Producer  
**The Pines Ranch**

## The Pines Ranch Organic Farming in St. Martin Parish



Dr. Jess Crosier is a Certified Master Farmer and a Master Cattleman.

**The Pines Ranch** is a 48-acre organic farm in St. Martin Parish. On the farm, you will find bee hives, Low-line black Angus cattle, Katahdin hair sheep, chickens, a horse, a donkey, citrus trees, vegetable plants, and a blood hound named Olivia—all living in harmony with the land.

Owners Jess and M'Liss Crosier are pathologists in the local medical community by occupation, but organic farmers/ranchers by avocation. Raising their 4-year old twin boys Jess Jr. and Ben to respect the land comes naturally to the Crosiers. You will find the twins running behind their mother and father helping when they can, but always learning valuable scientific and life lessons.

"It has taken generations of southern Louisiana families to build the farms we have," said Dr. Crosier. "Most of the young people in southern Louisiana don't understand the value of the farms, but my children will."

As an organic producer, Dr. Crosier uses clover and grasses for grazing, bees for pollinating, and chickens to help eliminate parasites and provide fertilizer. He has established a practical rotational system that combines his cattle, sheep, donkey, and horse for grazing. He calls them his "mob." Multi-species grazing and browsing has worked effectively at the Pines Ranch.

"Nature never grows plants or animals in a monoculture, why should farmers? There is a companionship. They all know where to go . . . it is like a well regulated highway," said Dr. Crosier. "The animals have formed a symbiotic relationship. The donkey, horse, and cows provide protection and security for the sheep. The sheep consume plants that are undesirable to the other livestock. Somehow they've got it all worked out."

Dr. Crosier rotates his animals about every other day using a concentrated grazing approach. After he moves his cattle, he tries to mow the grass and clover down to two to

four inches, which helps to reduce parasites. He usually does this after every, or every other, grazing cycle. The mowing triggers the forage to grow back lush, uniformly, and more vigorous than before, while placing the green litter back on the soil surface to feed the all important natural nutrient cycle that keeps the organic production system going. A rest period of 18 to 30 days is allowed between grazing periods. When the undesirable plants have to compete under similar harvest as do the desirable forages, they cannot sustain themselves. The management is implemented to give the desirable species the advantage.

Dr. Crosier inherited his conservationist's respect for the land from his Native American heritage. As a conservationist, he works with the local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement conservation practices to protect, conserve and enhance his farm's natural resources.



NRCS developed a conservation plan that is specific to Dr. Crosier's farm. NRCS also provided technical assistance, management and implementation support, and information on conservation practices. Dr. Crosier has implemented many best management practices to improve his farming operation, and as a result, water leaving his farm is cleaner, there is minimal soil erosion, and his soils and farm animals are extremely healthy.

Recently, through a special NRCS Organic Initiative, Dr. Crosier installed a seasonal high tunnel on his farm to raise heirloom tomatoes and peppers—adding to the crop diversity of the Pines Ranch.

# Jess Crosier Conservationist