

“We have two Jersey/Beefmaster cows that provide enough milk for our family of five, the two interns, and a full-time employee. The cows also add value as an attraction to the guest house, as we offer an Airbnb experience teaching people to hand-milk them,” says Karen.

The Galloways manage their pastures through ultra-high-density strip grazing in 8m x 45m camps, which are moved daily. This allows the pastures a 90-day recovery period. Karen says this grazing strategy should allow them to keep up to three times more animals on the hectare at their disposal, but the system is not yet optimised.

“With only two cows, the vegetation isn’t grazed intensively enough, so we need more animals,” she says, adding that last year was particularly dry.

“We were on the verge of having to feed the animals, so we’re taking baby steps as we move along.

“We’ve tried strip grazing with our pigs, but they were too destructive, so now we have a large area with one wallow for our sow and piglets.”

They sell their bull calves as veal at two-and-a-half months, when they are still easy to handle and transport. Karen plans to use a Nguni bull for future breeding to produce smaller-framed animals that are hardier and easier to manage.

“I’m part of a WhatsApp grazing group, where we exchange ideas and knowledge. However, most of it is geared towards large commercial operations, so the challenge is to take that information and adapt it to our micro-farming business. Things like artificial insemination and vaccinations are geared towards large herds, so it becomes very expensive to have service providers come out for two cows,” notes Karen.

Along with the two cows, she keeps five sheep, as well as one-year-old Roxy, an Anatolian Sheepdog, which is currently in training as a livestock guardian dog. She is kept in a separate camp when unsupervised.

“We were warned that she could still fool around and possibly harm the other animals until she reaches the age of two. She’s very sweet, but not a pet,” explains Karen.

### DEEP LITTER SYSTEM

There are two chicken flocks on the farm that supply them with eggs and meat. One flock shelters in a mobile unit called a chickshaw, and these birds help control ticks, spread manure and feed on fly larvae as they move with the cows and sheep.

“We had to predator-proof the mobile unit with an additional layer of mesh wiring on the floor. We also created safe spaces for the chicks to hide



### TOP:

Karen and Roger Galloway have a mobile chicken house called a ‘chickshaw’ on their eco guest farm, Heartwood Homestead.

### ABOVE:

As the farm’s water supply comes exclusively from harvested rainwater, the Galloways make use of waterless compost toilets.

### LEFT:

The layer hen house has a roll-away system for the eggs.

### OPPOSITE PAGE:

The farm’s timber-frame guest house sleeps three people.

and feed in when the flock is inside the unit in the mornings, before they exit for ‘work,’” says Karen.

Chicken manure drops from the chickshaw onto the fields as fertiliser, she says.

The other chicken flock consists of layer hens in a deep litter system, with rabbits suspended above them in cages. The chickens also have access to a trapdoor, so they can come and go at will. Commercially fertilised eggs are bought in to be hatched by the hens.

“We tried buying in point-of-lay hens, but their survival rate was very low. True free-ranging hens seem to need a mother to teach them how to keep safe from eagles and mongooses.