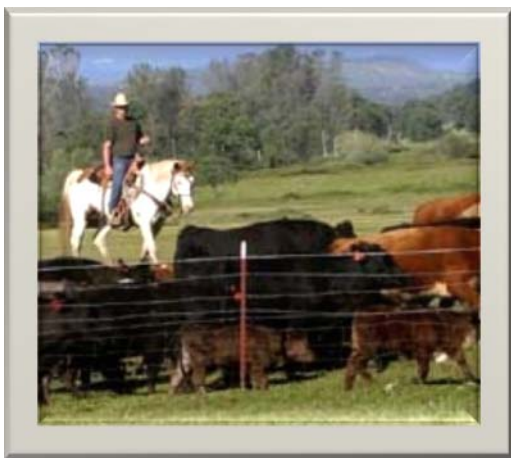


FARMERS' PROFILES



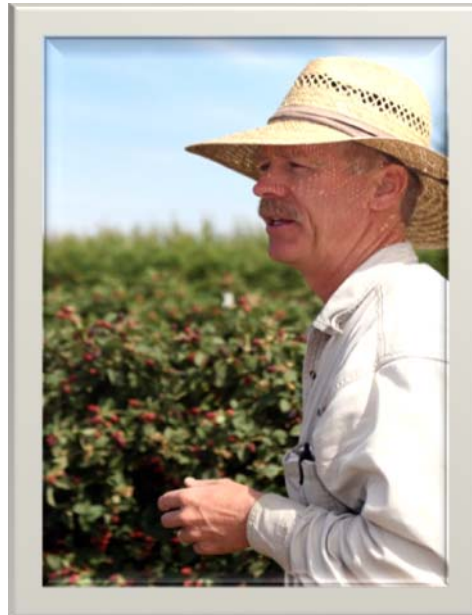
Jim Scott grows grapes at Naughty Boy Vineyards in Potter Valley, about half an hour from Ukiah. He is a member of the Mendocino Winery and Wine Growers Commission. He and his wife, Emjay, both of whom are 53, buy their insurance coverage on the individual market and pay \$900 a month. They have a \$14,000 deductible. Health care costs are their single biggest expense – more than their mortgage or fuel costs. Their daughter lives in British Columbia so Jim has had an opportunity to compare the Canadian healthcare system to what he has experienced here. He says, “There, they actually have health insurance for everyone. In the U.S., health insurance is too often a scam.”



Joni and Glenn Kelley's Lazy K Ranch is nestled in the foothills of Shasta County about 25 miles northeast of Redding. There they graze 100 head of cattle and host events such as weddings and company picnics or retreats. Glenn is also a general engineering contractor.

Since they are self-employed they purchase health insurance on the individual market through a broker.

The Kelley's pay \$882 every two months for a family of four with a \$3500 per person deductible. Their insurance policy covers major medical care, but does not cover dental services. Their 16 year old daughter had her tonsils out in June of 2007 and Joni had her appendix out in 2005. When Glenn fell off a horse and lost consciousness, the CAT scan alone cost \$12,000. Over the past four years they have had to put many of their health expenses on credit cards.



Photos courtesy of Megan Klugh, Davis Life Magazine

Robert Ramming is an organic grower who offers direct retail sales on-farm and via farmers' markets. He and his wife, Debbie, own and operate Pacific Star Gardens in Yolo County. Their 40-acre farm includes about 8 acres of melons, watermelons, vegetables and u-pick fruits. Robert (52) and Debbie (51) have 4 children (ages 17 to 24) and buy their family PPO insurance plan on the individual market. Their family is in very good health and has no medical problems. Premiums for the \$5,000 (per person)/\$10,000(family max) annual deductible policy cost over \$6,000 per year. After deductibles are met, the insurance pays 70 percent of the bill and the Ramming's still have to pay 30 percent. They have no vision or dental coverage. Including insurance premiums, typical out-of-pocket medical expenses for the Ramming family run about \$10,000 per year. As small-scale farmers whose modest income can vary widely from year to year, medical expenses and insurance represent the largest part of their family budget.

No photos available.

Marcia and John Lazaro grow grapes at Paradise Canyon Farm in Ukiah. John is also co-owner of a local real estate company and together they own other investment properties. Marcia is 49, John is 51 and their kids are 9 and 12. Because they are self-employed, they purchase health insurance on the individual market. Their premium is \$2,715 a quarter, or \$10,860 a year, with a \$2,000 deductible per person or \$4,000 per family. They also have co-payments of \$45 for doctors' visits and a separate \$500 deductible for brand-name medications, like the inhaler Marcia uses for her asthma and John's heart medicine.

John needed heart surgery last fall. The original bill was over \$175,000. After the insurance discount and payment, the Lazaros still owed close to \$8,000. They were able to negotiate a payment plan with the hospital – even so, the bills left them struggling with medical debt that they weren't able to completely pay off until this June.

Despite having insurance, Marcia has delayed having a bad knee and arthritic foot repaired because of the high deductible and out-of-pocket expenses she would have to pay. Marcia and John also pay out-of-pocket for their dental care because dental insurance costs too much for the limited benefits provided.

Last year, their total medical out-of-pocket expenses, not including medications, was over \$18,000. This was about 28 percent of their taxable income, an expense that Marcia says is daunting. "When we put in our vineyard, I used to say that the income pays our mortgage. Really, I should be saying that it pays our medical insurance and expenses."