

# Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



## Fall 2008 news from Bone Dry Ridge

What a lovely summer. Lots of cloudy days. My favorite. Me and my critters think cloudy days are just great. It makes it more pleasant to work outside. This cloudy weather however, did not bring much rain to Bone Dry Ridge. From the first of April until the end of August we had less than two inches of rain and then no rain in September and not much in October. The average rainfall in this area is 46" a year so we have a long way to go.

Raising the pigs was a delight. I think from now on I will raise two to three pigs a year. They did a good job digging out the barn. I drilled dried corn on the cob into the bedding that the pigs then went after. They are wonderful rototillers. This made the job of cleaning out the barn much easier. One thing that surprised me about pigs was how much grass they eat. At times I would have the sheep grazing on one side of the fence and the pigs on the other. It made me sad to think about the tens of thousands of pigs that are raised inside buildings on concrete floors that never get to taste grass. If we only let these animals be who and what they are we would not only have better quality meat but I like to think we would be a better society.

The sheep are still grazing in the lowlands. I'm planning on bringing them home next week. They have been grazing on fallow fields on one of the neighboring organic vegetable farms down the road. This is our first summer bringing them down to the fields in the lowlands. My husband and I modified the hay trailer so we could transport the sheep. I bought a solar electric charger for the electric fences and set up a watering tank on the back of the truck. This makes for a totally mobile operation. As our fields are going dry in July or August I can transport the sheep to greener fields in the valley. The first week or so the sheep were gone from the home fields I missed them terrible. But I go every day and check on them and move them around the pastures as the grass gets eaten down. They were so happy and that made me happy. I am looking forward however, to having them in the barn for the winter. That gives me time to just hang out with them and get to know some of the ewe lambs that I kept to expand the flock. The sheep are also in need of having their hooves trimmed. I trim the hooves when I shear but it looks like one extra trimming this year is needed.

The cows were here at home all summer. When the sheep left and the grass was not growing very fast I simply gave them all the fields to roam around. They liked that and I hoped their hooves would get trimmed walking around the hills. But their hooves are still too long so I have to get a "cows hooves trimmer" soon. Probably a profession you did not know existed. Renting a bull has been harder than I imagined. I was hoping to have a bull here in July or August but that did not happen and I am now waiting to get one in the next week or so. Cows are pregnant for nine months, just like us. I like to have

calving season in the spring but next year it will not be until fall. This will set us back a few years (meaning it will take a few years to bring the cows back to having calves in the spring). Hopefully I can rent a bull from the same farmer in the future and not spend so much time looking for a good bull.

I took a part time job this fall with Helsing Junction Farm. I'm their Gleaners coordinator. The Gleaners are volunteers that come and harvest what is left in the fields after the season is over. We now have two groups that come out on regular bases. One harvests for "Thurston County food banks" and the other for "Food not Bombs", an organization that cooks and serves warm meals to homeless people in Olympia on weekends. This is a perfect fall job for me. I can make it work well with my duties here on my farm. If you know of an organization that is interested in Gleaning, please give them my number and I can figure out how to make it happen.

Hope you all have a good winter. Thank you for your business. We should all take a moment on Thanks Giving and give thanks to the critter that give us meat to eat and thanks to all the farm workers that bring the food out of the fields and of course Mother earth for her generosity.

Your Farmer

Selma

PS: Those of you who are getting beef this winter, I plan to slaughter in early January.