

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Fall 2009 news from Bone Dry Ridge

I just said goodbye to fifty students from the Evergreen College. This is the third or fourth time the EcoAg class has visited the farm. I find it interesting that someone like me is just doing what I think is right and then the word gets out and all of a sudden you are a subject in some University course. It kind of tickles me actually, to get all this attention. It



is very gratifying to be around people who are intrigued by what you do and appreciate it. I'm sure tomorrow however, I will be pondering over "did I really say that" which always happens to me after speaking to large crowds.

Last week I delivered lamb to my Seattle customers. I always look forward to this day, when I get to meet you, the people who eat the meat I raise. It is something I cherish. When I started this business I never did think that would be one of my

favorite tasks. I'm considering offering lamb deliveries to Olympia as well. This would give me a chance to meet more of you, my customers.

My sheep are now a totally mobile flock. Once my pastures are bone dry, usually by the end of July, I gather the sheep, put them in the trailer and drive them to greener pastures. They are very happy with me. I also made good use of my new microscope this spring. I was able to test for worm loads in sheep stool samples. This helped me accurately determine the time to administer the worm medicine. In the past I always guessed. This I believe, is one of the reasons the lambs were so large this year, the other factor of course were irrigated pastures both at Helsing Junction Farm and Rising River Farm. Since farming is such a risky business it is nice to have a bumper crop after having had some lean years in the past. Raising animals is not something you make money at, especially if you are absolutely committed to giving them the best life you can. I recently saw a photograph of a meat table at a grocery store that was taken in the 40's (determined by the grocers outfit). The display was all lamb cuts and the price was \$ 2.70 per pound. It is almost 70 years later and the price of meat has not changed that much. Do we know of any merchandise that has remained about the same of 70 years?

To practically freeze the price, animals were treated like a commodity and not the living creatures they are, and from where I stand it is the biggest horror story we have created. I could go on and on but I need to keep my blood pressure low.



Pretty Boy Floyd is here again visiting the cows. The picture show his offsprings that were born in early September. They are totally adorable. They show very strong Highland characteristics except for their ears. They are straight from dad. It will be fun to see what they will grow up to be like. Raggi, my nice old cow is thin again. She is the only animal I have on the farm that seems to have a hard time staying in good shape. I think I should isolate her from the others and give her some grain with her hay. I generally don't feed grain but she has a calf to feed and like all moms will give all she has to her baby. I think she needs a little help with getting extra calories.

Our old little horse Dooly died this summer. It was very sad for all of us. Annie's (Helsing Junction) twins Daisy and Tess visit me on Fridays and they kept asking when he as going to come back. It was hard to explain to three year olds that when you die you don't come back. They would ask me "who died Dooly". We painted rocks with his name and set them on his grave and that seemed to give them some idea that Dooly was now in the ground.



My second year raising pigs has been very educational. The first two pigs Theo and Louise did very well although it was nice to have them leave since they had decided that digging at the foundation of the barn was really fun. The second pair, Victoria and Gwenevere were doing fine until about a week ago they came down with a bacterial infection and almost died. The vet told me to prepare myself for at least one of them not making it. This was a very big shock since just two days

before they were running around. The only thing I could do was to give the penicillin. This is something I will only do in an emergency and this sure was one. They both had a fever of 105.7 and their normal level is similar to ours. This is actually one of the reasons I am not certified organic. I prefer to not be restricted to what I can and can not do to help my animals in dire straits. It is actually very easy to raise animals the organic way. I just give them what they need, which is lots of space, good clean food and water as well as access to salt and minerals. However, sometimes your best efforts are not enough and that was the lesson for this years pig raising. The pigs are now just fine and are enjoying digging up my front yard. I think instead of having Organic Certification there should be disclosure of what chemicals and medications are used in and on the food we eat. That to me seems like a much more honest way of letting us know what is in our food.

Summer was very busy, actually way more busy then I wanted it to be. I think I took on too many tasks for the amount of time a day offers. I'll have to remember that next summer so I don't make the same mistake. I had intended to write a weekly newsletter and put it one the website but that never happened. I will try to get into the habit however, this winter.

Thank you all for your support over the years and may you have a great winter

Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*