

# Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



## Spring 2010 news from Bone Dry Ridge

Happy Spring to you all

After such a mild winter (except for the hard frost in December), I guess it was expected that the Spring would be cold and rainy, but at the same time I hoped it wouldn't happen. But here we are in early May and it still feels like March.

In the last newsletter (past newsletters are on the website) I said the truth will come out in the Spring regarding the fertility of the ram. I did not have to wait until Spring for the truth, since in mid-January all the ewes came into heat again. That meant Ómar, the ram, was shooting blanks. I consulted with my vet and with my uncle in Iceland, and we came to the conclusion something that had happened to him in the summer had made him infertile. There was only one thing to do: get rid of Ómar and get another ram that could do the job. The breeding season of Icelandic sheep is dictated by light. They will only breed from November until February. I had to act swiftly, since time was running out. We sent Ómar to Valhalla (sorry guys, but he was here for only one reason) the next morning, and borrowed a ram from Tanglewood Farm in Yelm by the afternoon. After some days of charming the ewes, breeding resumed and all the ewes came into heat again. Since it was so late in the breeding season, it is hard to say if they all got bred. Björn, the new ram, fathered many lambs on his farm this Spring. I'm crossing my fingers that all my ewes got bred.



Ewes are pregnant for 135 to 145 days, which means the lambs will be born in July instead of April. My lambs, therefore, will not be sent to Valhalla until mid-December. They can become your Holiday dinner, but I will not be taking orders for these lambs until after they are born. It seems wise to "not count my chickens before they hatch." In late July I will send you lamb brochures again, at which time you can put in your orders for Holiday lamb. I'm expecting them to be smaller than usual, since they will be a month younger than usual.

Tanglewood Farm and I have entered into a cooperative partnership. I am just about at the limit of animals I can graze on my land, they also raise Icelandic sheep, and we share the same farm-animal philosophy. We have helped each other over the years, and we think we are a good match.

It takes a long time for each one of us small farmers to let people know we exist. I find my efforts over the last 10 years have now come to fruition. People are hearing and reading about me. I now have so many people on the mailing list, there is no way I can serve all of you. Instead of turning people away and making them find another farmer with the same philosophy, it makes sense to us that we join and share our expertise and product. We are very excited about this new partnership and look forward to working together. Ordering lamb will be no different. I will send out the brochures and handle the paperwork. Tanglewood Farm is in the process of making a website to which you will be able to link from my website. The lambs from Tanglewood Farm were born in April and they will go to Valhalla in the Fall. The attached brochures are for their lamb. It will be the very same as from my farm: same feed, same breed, same handling, and the same respect given to the animals as here.

I have expanded my delivery. I will now be delivering lamb and pork to both Olympia and Seattle. Lamb will be delivered in late October, and then again on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. The December lamb will not be frozen, so you can plan to eat some of it for your Holiday dinner. The delivery is to a central location in both Seattle and Olympia, where you will be able to pick it up at a set date and time. If you opt for this service, I will be in contact with you when the day draws near.



The pigs arrived in mid-April. All six of them fit into the large dog kennel in which we brought them home. Getting pigs is like getting puppies: they are so playful and they get into all kinds of trouble. They don't stay like puppies for very long, however. In just two weeks, only two of them at a time would be able to fit into the dog kennel. Every time I have pigs I am amazed by how quickly they grow. They love to eat and run around and play in the grass. You may not know this, but pigs eat a lot of grass. They dig for roots but also simply

go out and graze just like sheep. Together they all go grazing around the barn and then come running toward me as I come to see them. There are five females and one male. The chickens like to hang out with the pigs, since the pigs are such good diggers and bring bugs up to the surface.

After last year's pig illness (see winter newsletter), I have decided to vaccinate the pigs against the bacterial infection that two of them got last year. The illness is called Erysipelas and the vaccine I am using is called Erysipelothrix. I have pondered this all winter and have realized I simply am not willing to take the risk that my pigs get sick and almost die on me again. It was too scary.

The cows had an easy winter. Since it was so mild I let them have access to most of the pastures. There was grass to eat until the frost, after which they had access to all the hay they wanted. Raggi, my good old cow, limped, but was fine, as long as she had a large area to roam. I did not confine them until the end of January. Thinking back on it, early January would have been better. They were back out in the fields by early April, happy as clams. The calves from last fall, Iona and Alastair seem to be larger than our purebred Highland calves. Their father, Pretty Boy Floyd, is an Angus-Brahman mix and some of his



characteristics seem to be coming through loud and strong. They are just as hairy as their moms, but Iona does not seem to be developing horns, and Alastair's are going to be small. They are both mild mannered, which comes from both sides. Pretty Boy Floyd sure is big, but he is also very mellow. A good combo, I might add. The beef that I'm offering this summer is pure-bred Highland. Next summer, however, I will offer the Highland-Angus-Brahman mix. I'm looking forward to see how it turns out. Cross-breeding brings vigor into a breed. So-called Range cows (mixed-breed cows), for example, are usually the healthiest and most vigorous.

Hope you all have a pleasant Spring. Don't hesitate to call or email if you have questions.

Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*