

# Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



## Summer 2010 news from Bone Dry Ridge

Happy Summer (is it here yet?)

### First some business:

**The Cattle** will go to Valhalla on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August. The carcasses will hang in the butcher shop cooler for two weeks and will then be cut and wrapped according to your custom specifications. It will then take three to four days to freeze solid, after which your order can be picked up at the butcher shop. The butcher will contact you for cutting and wrapping instructions. They will also let you know when the meat is ready for pick-up.

**The Pigs** will go to Valhalla in the third week of September. The carcasses will hang in the butcher shop cooler for a week, and then be cut, wrapped and smoked according to your custom specifications. The smoking process can take about a week, and additionally a few more days to freeze well. Your order is then ready for pick-up. The butcher will call you for cutting, wrapping and smoking instructions and he will let you know when it is ready for pick-up. Those of you that have opted for delivery, expect to have it by mid-October.

**Fall Lambs** will go to Valhalla on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October. They are all cut and wrapped according to Icelandic custom. You can plan to pick them up at the butcher shop late in the week of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October. Delivery will also be made in the third week of October.

**Xmas Lambs** will go to Valhalla in mid December. They will be delivered to you frozen, few days before Xmas. I had initially intended to deliver them unfrozen just before Xmas but thinking about the weather conditions in the last few years, in mid December, floods and snow storms. It seemed to risky. To many things could go wrong. I am expecting the lambs to be in the 35 lb range. Some larger some smaller. I am taking Xmas lamb orders now.

**Butcher shop news.** I'm using a new butcher shop for the beef and the lamb. It is called Heritage meat and is right here in Rochester. He used to be my butcher, years ago and I liked him a lot but I was not fond of the slaughter guy associated with them. Now there is a new slaughter outfit called Ben's Custom Slaughter. I met Ben this summer and liked him and have asked him to slaughter my animals. This is on of those relationship that is based on a lot of trust and only works if there are mutual good feelings. I am excited to be working with Ben and Heritage Meat and hopefully we will stay together for a long time. Those of you who will pick up at the butcher shop, I will soon send you driving directions to Heritage Meat.

Is summer finally here? It is hard to tell. Sometimes it just feels like a fantastic spring. But my critters and I are not complaining. We love cool, cloudy days. The animals love to graze during the cool days, and I love cloudy days. Then I can be out there, working my little behind off, and not get too hot. This Icelandic body of mine likes to work in the cool weather. Cool Springs and cool Summers are not bad for all farmers. The grass has been growing like nobody's business. It is nice and lush, even now in early August. This is the first time in 10 years the fields here at Bone Dry Ridge are not drying up by this time of the year. I may not even have to move the sheep to their mid-summer grazing area until September, and if we get early rain, they may just stay here at home. I have already gotten a good crop of hay from the summer grazing fields instead.

The Xmas lambs are here. Early July was a busy month with lambing. It certainly was different to have lambs born in July versus the usual, April. It was light outside until late, and I did not have to

wear heavy clothing to hang out with my ewes as they gave birth. The ewes were also incredibly considerate and gave birth almost exclusively during the daylight hours. Most of the lambing went well, with the exception of one ewe, whose lamb died inside of her 10 days before it was due. She tried to expel the dead lamb, but would not dilate. Doing a C-section was an option, but it is very expensive and once this happens to a ewe, she is likely to have it happen again. So I had to make the difficult decision to shoot her. Most unpleasant, but this is a farm, and sometimes terrible things happen. She was a lovely ewe. I had hoped to have her for years, but that was not to be.

The lovely part of lambing is that I have 25 adorable little creatures running around out there.



There are lots of very cool colors', since Björn the ram is brown and white, and his genes carry a lot of colors. I don't think we have ever had such a variety of colors on this farm. I will keep four as replacement ewes, but all the others are for sale as Xmas lambs. I do have two bummer lambs this summer. They got rejected by their moms, who were only willing to care for one of their lambs this year. This does happen now and then. The only negative part is that I have to feed them every four hours for three months or so. It is a big job, and thankfully my husband is working out of the house and loves to take a break from sitting in front of the

computer to feed the little ones. They are totally adorable.

Our mama cows Raggi and Skye are very pregnant these days. We are expecting them to give birth in the second or third week of August. Bull calves tend to be born late. They like to stay inside their moms an extra week or so. Cow's gestation is about 283 days. This can vary a bit, so one has to be on the look-out for calves, a week before and then two weeks after the 283 days. Highland cattle tend to have small calves. Assisting with calving is not common. The calves are about 50 lbs when they are born. This is in contrast to Holstein cows (dairy) who have calves around a 100 lbs. Holsteins are bigger than Highland cows but, not twice as big. My neighbor, Keith the dairyman, frequently needs to assist in births. He is probably the most experienced midwife/midhusband I know. I look to him all the time for advice regarding birthing. He has seen it all.

The pigs are having a ball. I moved them to the woods earlier this summer, actually after they ate three of my meat chicks (they are omnivores after all). They love being in the woods. There is lots of shade, lots of vegetation, and lots of room to hide in. Pigs communicate continually, grunts for the most part. As I come to bring them food or fill their water, I talk to them so they don't get startled. They don't like it if I sneak up on them. They are going through food like nobody's business. Their water comes out of little water spouts. The pigs have to move the spouts a little to make the water run. Four of them can drink at the same time. They are so clever that they keep the water running a little to make themselves a mud puddle. I don't like to waste water here at Bone Dry Ridge, but I think this is so clever of them, I will just have to account for the mud-puddle water in my water management plan.



Have a great summer. Will be in contact again in the Fall.

Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*