

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Summer News 2012 from Bone Dry Ridge

Hello All and Happy almost finished Summer

The weather report: A very dry summer, but since spring rain was abundant, things are still looking OK in the fields. It would be nice to have a day or two of rain soon to prevent the grass from going dormant. It takes so long for it to come back from dormancy. If we get just a little bit of rain, the grass will stay green and hang in there until the rains really start.

I have started giving the cows hay. I don't like having them eat the field down too much, since that affects the grasses in a negative way. If grasses get eaten below their shoulder (this is my very non-technical term for a part on the grass stem), it will take the grass enormous energy to grow back. If this happens repeatedly the grass dies. Different varieties of grasses have different shoulder height. If a field is overgrazed, little by little the big lush grasses disappear and the short and, therefore, low shoulder grasses take hold and dominate. Not even the sheep like to eat most of these low grasses when they have matured. I think of them as fluff. These low grasses are very yummy in the spring, however, so they are not totally negative. Just don't want whole fields of them. It spells "bad field management."

The sheep are happily grazing down at Helsing Junction Farm. I irrigate that field so it is very lush, with all kinds of good plants for sheep. Managing the sheep has been a breeze this summer. They stayed here at home until mid-August since we had plenty of grass. Then they went to a field between Rising River Farm and Wobbly Cart Farm Collective. The first move is always the hardest. The lambs have never been driven around in a trailer and the sheep are cautious about what I'm up to. It gets easier as the summer progresses, but it never gets as easy as just calling them and saying "load up." One of my ewes is not well. She seems to have very little immunity to intestinal worms. I have never had a case like this before in an adult ewe. I'm going to bring her and her little ones home and nurture her back to health. But she will not be sticking around for next year. This is something one has to cull out of the herd. I'm really bummed out about that, because she is a nice creature with a lovely temperament.

After a bit of a rough start the pigs are doing well. They love being in the woods. Every year when I move the pigs from the barn to the woods, I worry they may not like it and want to go back to the barn. That could cause a problem. Pigs that escape once always know there is a chance to do it again, so it is best to keep them happy. Every year they don't even look back at the barn. They think the woods are way better, but this does not keep me from worrying every time, I don't know why. Since apples have started to fall all over the countryside, so I have been collecting them for the pigs. One of my friends said that these pigs are pre-seasoned with apple sauce.

Pretty Boy Floyd is here with the cows. This is his annual visit. When he comes the cows perk up their heads and are somewhat defensive, but as soon as there has been some sniffing and greetings, all is calm. He has come so many times and they really like him. He is like an old friend that is visiting. My oldest cow, Raggi, is 11 years old now and I wonder how much longer she will be with us. She is in good health and hopefully will continue to give us calves for many years to come.

On the creamery front: I'm taking a middle step before plunging into my own creamery building. I'm going to be leasing Black Sheep Creamery's processing plant until I get my feet under me in this new endeavor. They are a sheep dairy and make wonderful sheep cheeses which they sell at farmers markets and in stores. I have found a very nice 32 oz glass jar for my yogurt. This will be a returnable container that I will wash and reuse. To start off, that is the only size I will make, but I plan to do smaller sizes, as well as flavors, in the future. The options are really endless: drinkable yogurt, kefir, skyr and filimjolk (both Scandinavian cultured milks). I'm hoping by the next newsletter I will be making yogurt at Black Sheep. I will keep you posted.

Take care,

Your farmer and shepherdess

Selma