

# Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



## Summer News 2013 from Bone Dry Ridge

I hope you all have had a good Summer

**The weather report:** The weather has been great this summer. I think my animals and I all agree on that: not too hot and the August and early September rain has been wonderful. It prevents the grasses from going dormant and provides nice new grass for all my herbivores. Even the chickens benefit, because worms are coming close to the surface.

**Cows:** The bull, Pretty Boy Floyd, arrived yesterday. It is always so interesting to see my cows greet Floyd when he comes back and all the body language that goes on, lots of conversations. I don't have any steers in the herd this year, so there are no domineering postures. They have always been very gentle anyway. No steer or young bull in his right mind would challenge Floyd. We once had a two year old steer go up to Floyd to show himself off, and Floyd just gently pushed him. That was that for their male posturing. Floyd reminds me of a gentle giant, who could totally take you out if the need arose.



We have three little calves this year, since Abigail had a calf this summer, along with her mom, Raggi, and her aunt Skye. Abigail was a bit of problem in the beginning, since she did not want to let her calf suckle. She sure loved the little thing, but it could not get any milk from her. We kept her calf alive for her and struggled (as much as one can struggle with a 1000lb animal) with her for a week until she finally would let the poor little baby drink from all teats. Now she is so into being a mom she loves all the calves. She lets them all suckle. I sometimes see two calves on her at a time.

**Pigs:** The pigs were just beautiful this year. Feeding them cultured milk every morning certainly did not hurt. They loved getting their five gallons of that every morning. But ten pigs was a lot. They cleared out the understory of their wooded area in no time. I'm going to reseed the area and have them in a different location next year. It needs some rest from the ever-digging pigs. These pigs arrived a bit earlier and left a little earlier than those in the past, and it was great. It was nice to have them gone by mid-July, so all the pig chores came to an end before August.

**Sheep:** I had a big bumper summer with my sheep. In late July I discovered that the wormer I had used in late June was not affective at all. All of the sheep had a big parasite load. Some of the ewes were lethargic and the lambs had not grown much for 5 weeks. Spring and early summer grasses are most rich in protein and therefore it is the most important time for lambs to grow. It is also the time parasites are the most numerous. I use a microscope to check out parasite load and am totally on top of it. But this year the wormer I used did not do a thing. By the time I figured what was going on, the sheep and lambs had missed a month of

good eating. When this kind of a thing happens, every farmer goes on a guilt trip, feeling neglectful and very angry at him/her-self. I felt no different, but also realized there was nothing to do but take care of the problem and then give them the best pastures I could find. I did give them some additional nutrition, in the form of rolled oats, for one month. Now they all look very good again, but the lambs are smaller than they should be by this time of year. I know from experience that if lambs are not big by now, I need to keep them until spring to get them to the usual average weight. As a result, my lambs will be a bit smaller this year. There is not much I can do about that, but at least they are all healthy and happy now, and their wool looks shiny and lovely. The rain that fell lately has been great for my sheep. The pasture they are in now is thick and lush with green grass.

**Chickens:** We have had a resident raven family here since the day we moved in, 13 years ago, and never had a problem with them until this year. They killed five of the young layers I was raising as replacement chickens. I was lucky, however, since one of my neighbors lost over a 100 chicks to a murder of ravens in just a few days. I'm not looking forward to having to figure out how to keep the ravens from my young chickens next spring. They don't go after the adults, but the little chickens are great prey for them. It takes a layer chicken about 5 months to grow to a size not desirable to ravens.



**The Creamery:** The yogurt selling is going as well as can be expected this early in the life of this little business. I'm producing 40 gallons every other week. I would like to get to 50 gallons per week soon. I'm looking into getting into more stores. Currently we are at Marlene's in Tacoma and Federal Way, and at Tacoma, Yelm and Olympia Food Co-ops, Stadium Thriftway in Tacoma, Tumwater Farmer's market as well as in our local IGA and Jeremy's in Chehalis. The Olympia Food Co-op is the only one that has a problem with accepting the deposit. They still have not figured out how to make it work on their cash register, but hopefully they will soon. I'm starting to bug them



about it, as well as also asking my customers to bug them about it. Selling to stores has been an interesting learning experience. I have come to identify stores by their feminine and masculine character. If the store has a lot of masculine energy, they will make such a fuss over the returnable jar, but the reaction is opposite when there is a large feminine presence. It has also been very interesting to me how wide the mark-up range is, depending on the store. It varies from 28% to 54%, which can make my yogurt either very affordable to expensive. Now that summer is at an end, I'm going to be focusing more energy on building up the creamery. I took a lot of video footage this summer to prepare for a crowd funding project through Kickstarter and/or Indigogo. All in good time.

Take care, Your farmer and shepherdess

*Selma*