

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Winter News 2013 from Bone Dry Ridge

Hello All and Happy Winter

The weather report: 2012 not only had a very long summer drought, it also rained a lot more than in a normal year. Precipitation in a normal year is between 48 to 52 inches. In 2012 we had 67 inches of rain. November and December were very soggy. What a way to end the year. It is now the end of February 2013 and it still a bit cold. The daffodils are about two weeks late, but they are coming. Spring is coming.

Cows: I sure hope Raggi is going to have a calf this spring. She does not look very pregnant, but then again she never really does until about a month before she gives birth. We

gave her a break from rearing a calf last year, in the hope she would gain some weight and look better. But no, she is just the same skinny gal she has always been. We were going to slaughter the heifer Abigail this summer, but she got bred by the bull and by the time we got it together it was to late too do anything about it. She will have her calf, and when the calf is at a weaning age, she will go. This leaves us with no Highlanders to slaughter this summer. We do however, again have two Kobie beef at Kode's, our neighbor, that we will be offering this spring. I have been going around looking at farms and cows in the area to



find if there is anyone else that is raising beef the way I like. Two neighbors in the next valley over do have Highland cattle, but they are into raising lean animals and I'm into raising beef with some fat on them. I have never been afraid of fat. A good layer of fat, especially around the kidneys, is a sign of good and plentiful forage. The slaughter guy and the butcher tell me I have some of the nicest grass fed beef they have seen. That means a lot to me, and I like to keep it that way. So if I do not find nice and fat grass fed beef in the area this spring, we may be a little short in the beef department this year. Lets not lose hope yet. It is still just February.

Pigs: I will be getting 10 piglets this year. They are scheduled to arrive mid-March. One of the reasons the sheep need to be out of the barn in mid-March is to make space for the pigs. This may not be the best year for increasing the pig herd, since the price for grain has gone through the roof. But I had so many people that I had to turn away last year, because I did not have enough pigs. I think my wooded pig area and the Taj Ma swine can hold at least 10 pigs, so we'll just have to see. I ordered the first batch of grain and I just about fainted when I saw the price. But there is hope that the price may go down a bit before

summer. There are other farms here in Independence Valley that also raise pigs, and we have been talking about the need to join forces and grow our own grain, and not be subject to weather conditions in the Midwest. Rising River Farm purchased a combine last year, so we at least could harvest grain. But that is not all that is necessary. The seeds need to be separated from the hulls plus we need a place to store them over the winter. We are considering this and there is a chance we may be able to make this happen, but all that still does not change the fact that this year's grain prices are very high.

Sheep: The sheep are starting to look over the fence at the green grass on the other



side. They have not started complaining yet, but I think it will be soon. They are enjoying the barn, however, because they just got shorn. In the cold morning, when I come out to attend to them, they often don't even like to get up. It is so nice and warm in the thick bedding. All that hay that is composting makes for a nice warm bedding. In the next two to three weeks they will be out in the field, and not come back to the barn until fall. I will make them a temporary mobile shelter and the never ending rotational grazing will begin.

The Creamery: I'm about a week away from starting. The jar label is done, the jars are in Auburn being printed this week. I have just about finished the trailer that will function as an incubator room, cooler and transport trailer. Buy one get two free. That is what I call it. Instead of getting financing through Enterprise for Equity (a wonderful organization that helps low income people start businesses), I decided to ask friends and family if they were interested in helping me instead. To my surprise many stepped forward, and within very little time, I had the funds to purchase the jars and lids and get all the printing done. In the last few weeks I have written some of the largest checks I have ever written. A bit scary, but also thrilling. One hurdle we just discovered is that the heater in the incubator room shuts off at 85 degrees F but we want it to stay between 90 and 95 degrees F. Better get that little thing worked out before I put 200 jars of yogurt in there to incubate, just to find out it is not warm enough to make it happen. I'm not losing sleep over this. I have been expecting things like this. I stay calm and work it out. My good friends Annie and Sue at Helsing Junction Farm have a very good motto they live and work by, "it's all good." I'm adopting it as well. **It's all good!**



Take care, Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*