

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm

Scottish Highland Cattle
Icelandic Sheep
Chickens
Bees
Pigs



Spring 2008 news from Bone Dry Ridge

It is so nice to see the tall grass in the fields. Even if it is a little taller than I would like it but after the cold spring I think I'll take this any time. The sheep go out to pasture in February and usually by mid March the cows go out. This is what happened this spring but by early April I had to take every one off again since the grass was not growing. It was simply too cold to grow. The cows went up to the plateau and the sheep into the barn. So for the first time all the lambs were born in and around the barn and not on pasture. This made my work easier in that I didn't have to go far to check on the ewes. In fact, all I had to do was look out the window to see if any were in labor. But the ewes were not particularly thrilled with this arrangement and by the end of April complained a lot. The barn was crowded and late one rainy night one of the last ewes had her twin lambs were one got mixed up and spent the night lying next to a different ewe. By morning the ewe rejected her new born. She would have nothing to do with it despite my attempt to have them bond again. After two days of forcing the lamb on her, I decided it was time for me to take over and become the lamb's mom for the summer. The feeding schedule is intense for the first few days but as May comes to a close I'm down to three feedings a day.



My new ram Ómar performed well this winter and every ewe had twins except of course the "first time" moms. They had singles. In fact we had one ewe give triplets but another ewe, which only had one lamb adopted one of the three. An absolutely perfect lambing season.

This year I'm not going to purchase extra lambs from my friend in Eastern Washington. I was not too happy with their size last year and since I have such good pastures the lambs grow so well here on this Bone Dry Ridge, I will simply try to expand my flock as the demand rises and hope for a perfect lambing season every year.

Raggi and Stella our highland cows had beautiful calves this spring, one boy and one girl. They are totally adorable in their fluffy red hair and get them selves in trouble all the time. It appears the red color is dominating in our heard. It has been years since we have had black or tan colored calves. We got rid of our bull last year. He was simply too expensive to keep. At this time we are on the lookout to rent a bull. A bizarre concept but when you think about it, it makes perfect sense.

I am experimenting with raising pigs this year. I bought Tamworth mixed breed piglets from a friend. I call them Elvis and Costello. Their job is to dig out the barn where the sheep spend the winter. During the winter I threw corn into the bedding to entice the pigs to rototill it over the summer. They have started and hopefully will have it all nice and fluffy by fall. They seem to be very happy pigs, often playing and chasing one another around the barn. When it is time for a snooze I see them bed down next to Doolie, our little horse. I was told pigs and horses do not get along but I beg to differ. They seem to love to hang out. I have seen the horse scratch the pigs



and they just loving it. Good buddies, at least so far. These pigs will of course get much bigger and I'll just have to see if this friendship grows with them.

Our bees did not fair so well over winter. All of our five hives died. We think it was the disease that wiped out many Western Washington and Oregon hives. The bees were in the hives, surrounded by honey but died right on the frames. This was disheartening since just a month earlier we had checked on them all and it looked like we had just lost one while the others were thriving. The whole bee situation in the country is quite scary. Agriculture without bees will suffer greatly.

Thankfully fuel prices don't affect a small farm like ours quite as hard as the big guys. We use very little fuel. The tractor is used mostly to keep the grass at a medium height and palatable for the livestock. But haying takes fuel and the price for "off road" diesel is even higher than gasoline. I purchase hay from a neighbor and he is buckling under these fuel prices. But I am thankful that is the only thing that went up. The slaughter guy and the butcher shop will charge me the same price as last year. But I do wonder what will happen next year if this trend keeps going. Lets hope this trend with fuel prices will level off soon.

Some of you have come to visit us in the past. You are always welcome again. Just call ahead to make sure I am at home. You may want to bring a picnic and make a day of it. The farm has a lovely setting. I noticed that many of you also belong to my neighbors CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture). Purchasing a share of the crop and getting a box full of goodies every week is a wonderful thing and beneficial to us all.

Check out your meat choices for this year. Lamb, beef and pork.

Your farmer,

Selma