

# Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



## Spring News 2013 from Bone Dry Ridge

Hello All and Happy Spring

**The weather report:** What a wonderful Spring. Such a treat after so many cold Springs in a row. This warm weather has made the vegetation speed up. Many plants are blooming ahead of time and the grass in the fields is growing like crazy. The animals cannot keep up. We have already done some mowing, which keeps the grasses from going to seed and keeps them producing good forage for the animals.

**Cows:** Since I have no Highland calves to slaughter this year, I have been driving around the valley looking for nicely grazed beef animals to offer you as an option. I figure that the calves that graze the historic Erikson farm live the good life, and I feel good about offering them to you. They are owned by my neighbor Sam Bickel. In the country, we call the people in the valley our neighbors. He is a logger by profession but has a soft spot for animals and has raised cows for just about his whole life. He and his wife Linda are great lovers of dogs and have rescued many. I will of course again be offering the wonderful Kobe beef that my neighbor Kode Morris raises. Hopefully between Kode and Sam we will have enough beef for every one that wants it.

**Pigs:** The pigs arrived in mid-March. They are just beautiful this year. They spent about one month in and around the barn and loved digging up the field around the barn, but were not excited about helping dig out the barn itself. I did not spread grain into the sheep bedding this Winter, so I guess there was no reason for the pigs to dig in it. This year's pigs are way more into digging than any other group of pigs I have ever had. They dug up a whole field in just about three weeks and they were just eight weeks old when they arrived! I moved them into the woods as soon as I could and harrowed and reseeded the field around the barn. Since the pigs did not dig out the barn at all, I had to do all of it myself. It is a bit of job and I have found that the only way to do it is to put a good book onto my iPod and do this job while listening to it. I'm sure iPods were invented for farmers and other folks that spend a lot of time by themselves and do physical work that often does not take much brain power.



**Sheep:** Lambing season dragged out for over a month. The first ewe had lambs on the second of April and the last one on the fourth of May. The last ewe had two lambs that needed my help to get into the world. I knew this ewe was about to give birth, so I gave her some space, and then came back to check on her about  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour later. The first lamb was halfway out but coming out backwards. This is really bad, since the umbilical cord gets severed before the head is out and the lamb suffocates. I arrived just at the right second and rushed to the ewe as fast as I could without spooking her, got a hold of the rear legs of



the lamb and yanked it out as fast as I could. The poor little thing took many deep first breaths and was a bit dazed in the beginning, but it soon recovered. The ewe was thrilled with her little one and took to cleaning it. Often when one lamb comes out the wrong way the second one also comes out the wrong way. Sure enough, 15 minutes later the second one came out with just the head. Normal birth is head and front legs coming out at the same time, kind of like diving out. I got hold of the head and while the ewe was

having contractions, I helped her ease it out. Thankfully, it did not get stuck on the shoulders but slide out after the ewe did some very strong pushing. All is good that ends well. This ewe's name is Perla but I like to call her Ms. Polka Dots since she has lots and lots of dots all over her body. She is a lovely creature and I plan to keep her ewe lamb for breeding. She had one boy and one girl.

**Chickens:** For years I have raised 50 chickens each year. They have been for my own consumption as well as a trade for vegetables. This year I'm offering you these chickens for the first time. I'm raising a breed called Freedom Rangers, originally a French breed that does well out in the field. The chickens live in and around a little travel trailer that I move to fresh pasture every day with my tractor. We have been having trouble with our resident Raven family wanting to eat our chickens. We have lost a few, but hope we have come up with a good solution to this overhead predation by using bird netting.

**The Creamery:** As with many start-up companies there are some hiccups to get over in the beginning. I wish my hiccup was not quite so big. I feel thoroughly tested. The permanent labeling on my jars was not as permanent as it was supposed to be. As we were sanitizing the jars during our first official yogurt making, some of the labels chipped off and some even peeled right off. I worked with the printer on how to make this better. Finally after two months of trying, we have come up with a solution, the labels are looking great and they are staying on the jar even after many washes. We have started production in limited numbers. It is currently available at the Tacoma Food Coop, our IGA in Rochester and Jeremy's in Chehalis. Soon to be available at Olympia Food Coop, West side, and Yelm Food Coop. I'm also working on getting it into the Olympia Food Coop, East side, and Marlene's in Tacoma and Federal Way and at Olympia Local Foods. The biggest hurdles for the stores is to figure out how to do the \$2.50 jar deposit on their cash registrar. An example of computers making our lives difficult.



Take care, Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*