

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Fall 2010 news from Bone Dry Ridge

Happy very late Fall

The thing I love about fall is the total change in my work schedule. All the animals go to their fall/winter locations and a new, very stable routine is established. This makes my life much more mellow and predictable. In early fall, it was a little tricky, however figuring out how to make good winter quarters for everyone. Having my lambs still here made this process much more complicated. I had to make winter quarters for the ram lambs and one for the ewe lambs. I don't want them to breed, so they had to be separated. The ewes are in the barn as usual, and the cows are still grazing the hills, but are also getting hay. All this sounds so straight forward and easy, but it was complicated. There is not a lot of flat ground at Bone Dry Ridge and all the animals need hay, water, and shelter, and a way for me to bring it to them in the pouring rain, on my tractor, without risking my life in the process. Anyway, this all took some time to work out, but now all is well. Every one is settled into the fall/winter routine.



Pretty Boy Floyd (the bull) just arrived to breed with the cows. He is as big as ever. I'm so happy he has a mellow personality, otherwise he would be kind of scary. He often has a look in his eyes telling me I think, that life is just swell. Perhaps it is, since his job is to breed cows and eat. What more can a bull ask for. The calves he fathered this year are doing very well. We call them Archie and Duncan. They got castrated in mid November. We did it later than usual, simply because it was hard to find

the time. There is very big difference between castrating a one month old calf and a three month old calf. But we got it done and now we don't have to think about it until next fall.

My poor old Raggi, one of my mama cows, is skinny again. She stops eating before she has her calf and then takes her time to start eating again after it is born. This time around I really paid attention to what was happening, and gave her all kinds of goodies to make her keep on eating. But she still got skinny. I spoke to my neighbor, the dairy farmer, who has farmed all his life. He said he has had this issue and told me to continue putting irresistible goodies in front of her when she wants to stop eating. He said that in his experience, this may take a few birthing cycles and then it just stops. It has been three times now and I sure hope this will end soon.

The pigs turned out very well this year. They were all lovely ladies and one gentle-pig. They reached the desired weight in good time and were very happy pigs. Six pigs are a lot of pigs when they all come running towards me, each one of them over 500 pounds. That's over 3000 pounds that wants to snuggle. They love being scratched and spoken to. Pigs talk continuously with each other, so when I come to see them I talk to them. This makes them feel good. They like communicating even if it is in a tongue they do not understand. They were very happy about living in the woods. It was probably the best place I could have put them. I'm going to set up a different area in the woods for them next year, so I can rotate between the two.

Pigs are very strong as you may already know, and they like to push things around, sometimes just for the fun of it, just to see if they can move it. If they do manage to move it, even if it is just a little bit, there is nothing that will stop them. They will continue until they are content. This makes it difficult when it comes to making them a shelter. The one they had this summer is just about on it's last legs, so for the new location, I'm going to have to dig deep for the posts. Pig proofing a structure is like building for a bulldozer. Pigs are very social and the structure will need to be big enough to hold all six of them. Guess how much space six 500 pound snuggling pigs take? More then you can imagine.

The sheep are in the barn with a new ram. He arrived just as breeding season started. The sheep liked him right away, and to my surprise he gets along fine with Dali. This is nice, since that makes it unnecessary to separate Dali to keep him safe during this time. I have not given the ram a name yet, and I wonder if I will keep him for more then this year, because he seems rather small.

Tanglewood farm gave him to me. When I looked at him this summer he seemed a good size, but next to my large girls (I have many large ewes) he seems small. It is too late to do anything about it now. Perhaps I will be ram-hunting next summer. One thing he has going for him is nice wool and a gentle disposition. These are both good qualities to have, but being big is more important. Finding a good, large ram with good temperament is more complicated then I had expected.



My first ram Svenni was the best ram I ever had. He was big and gentle, and had no horns. I compare all other rams to him. I think over the years he has gained qualities that I'm not sure he ever possessed, but he was the best. Omar was also a good ram, so him going infertile was such a bummer. I would have kept him for years.



My lambs that were born in July are all doing well. They are happily eating the hailage I had made especially for them. Unfortunately they waste a lot if it. I have tried various ways to make that not happen, but the lambs are determined to spoil some. I had hoped to slaughter them mid-December, but I feel they have still not reached a good slaughter size. They will therefore be with me until the end of January. The ewe lambs are particularly lovely. I have been spending some time with them and they are getting quite used to me. All but one will

come and sniff at me and stand near me when I sit on the ground. Those are the moments that are so precious: me sitting in the field, surrounded by lambs. So very lovely. I have picked two that I will keep as replacement ewes, and I'm going to pick two more. It is hard to choose, but by the end of January I will have to make up my mind.

Take care and you will hear from me in the new year.

Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*