

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Spring News 2012 from Bone Dry Ridge

Hello All and Happy Spring

I often seem to start my newsletters with a weather report, or a prediction. It seems to be a good way to start, since farmers are close observers of the weather. We are in fact totally obsessed with the weather. Here is my weather report: March was incredibly rainy. It rained 10.98" here at Bone Dry Ridge. That is more rain than is normal for November and December, our rainiest months, with between 8 to 9 inches each. (I have a very sophisticated weather station that gives me good data, a must for a weather obsessed farmer). It therefore, was very nice to have the 80+ deg, in May. Oh, how nice it felt to have sun on our faces. I even put on shorts, that have not been out of the closet since last September.

I will remember this Spring as the longest lambing season ever. It started on the 26th of March, and as I write this in mid-May, I still have a few very pregnant ewes. This all came about because I had a new ram who simply was not quite up to the task of breeding all the ewes. I think I expected too much from the poor fellow. He was simply a ram lamb and could not breed with my taller ewes, and I think he then just gave up. So they did not all get bred until I brought the old ram back to the barn. He was in another location with just a few ewes, who had all been taken care of.



As soon as the old ram, Gunnar arrived, Ari, the young ram, stepped aside. Obviously defeated. I felt bad for him. I put him in a separate stall in the barn so he would not be beat up by Gunnar. When breeding season was over, mid-February, I let Ari back out and all was well with the two fellows. They only fight during breeding season, and after that they are best friends.

I put the sheep out in early April, a bit later than normal, but the fields were very soggy from the rain in March. They were so happy to finally get out. Very pregnant, but frisky.

I will also remember this Spring as the Spring when I got the malnourished pigs. When I went to pick up the piglets at my friend James's farm, I was horrified to discover four out of the six piglets were malnourished, two of them severely malnourished. James was mortified by the conditions of the piglets. He had a new helper who felt he knew how to take care of pigs and got upset if James checked on him. James felt he had to give the guy some slack. Unfortunately the animals suffered. I can only imagine the talk James and his helper

had that evening. I told James that I would take them anyway. I have a very good set-up for the pigs in my barn, and I had the time to take care of them. Unfortunately, two of the poor little things did not make it the first night. It was terribly sad, but I focused on getting the others better. I cooked them porridge and added apple sauce and raw milk. They got probiotic in their food and electrolytes in their water. Three got much better right away, but



one needed more attention. Many mornings I expected to find the little fellow dead, but he had a great will to live. He had the poops very badly, so I fed him rice and bananas with a sprinkle of pro-biotics, by hand, many times a day. Little by little he got better. But then I noticed that he had an eye infection. There was just no break for him. I got an eye ointment from the vet and treated him twice a day for a week. He appeared blind in one eye, but there was nothing I could do about that. But as the

week went by his blind eye change color. Could it be that it was just blind from the infection? As I sit here and write this, I can tell you that he is just fine, not blind and gaining weight like a pig should, and running and playing around with the other pigs like nothing ever happened. He is much smaller, however, I would guess about 4 weeks behind the others. I call him PeeWee.

I recently picked up a second batch of pigs from James, as a replacement for the ones that died. They are in super condition, and the most adorable piglets I have ever had. One totally black, one black and brown spotted, and one multi-colored. All doing very well and getting along with the others.

Skye had a calf in mid-April. A lovely little heifer we call Hermione. At first I did not think it had suckled and was worried since they need to get the first milk, the colostrum within the first hour or so after they are born. They are born without any immunity and receive that from their mother's first milk. It is not as easy to intervene with cows as it is with sheep. Skye did not want my help, so I simply had to let her and her baby be. It turned out I was wrong all along. Skye knew what she was doing and her baby was just fine. But I did not see it suckle until it was three days old. Archie and Duncan are getting big. They have mellowed out a lot since last year, when they were fairly skittish. They will be leaving us in July or early August since they are getting so big. I mentioned in the last newsletter how much Abigail looked like her mom. She is changing a lot now and is turning out to be the least attractive heifer we have ever had. She still has the lovely light red color from her mother, but that is it for her beauty.

Take care,

Your farmer and shepherdess

Selma