

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Winter 2010 news from Bone Dry Ridge

Hello all and happy winter



I sure am enjoying these rainy days of January. I feel I have such a good excuse to stay inside. I don't even feel guilty sitting down to knit or read a book in the middle of the day. For me, winter in the Northwest lasts from mid-December to early February. About 1.5 months of winter and then Spring starts popping up all over, crocuses bloom, then daffodils, and we are on our way. But for now things are mostly sleeping. I was surprised, however, the other day when I was pruning the vineyard and the buds on the Siegerrebe grape vines were swelling and just about ready to crack open. Spring is really not that far away. Being a person from the far North, where the weather is hardly ever nice,

I love even winter in the Northwest. It is so mild and easy. You can still do a lot outside as long as you have good rain gear. I have lived on this side of the Atlantic for over 20 years and have not had a baaaad weather day yet. Sure, we have had some bad weather, but nothing like what I grew up with in Iceland. The hard freeze we had in December was a bit of a pain in the butt. I was so focused on making sure the animals' water did not freeze, I forgot about the house. We had no water for two days, but no broken pipes. The rest of the winter has so far been rather uneventful, which is just fine, since the last few winters were just about too much: big storm one year, major flood the next, and then last year we had all that snow and a big flood. I think this winter is just lovely.

The sheep certainly are happy to be in the barn. They prefer the barn to staying out in the rain, although their long wool keeps them totally dry. As soon as it starts drizzling they run into the barn. I like having them at home. This summer when they were grazing in the lowlands I missed them, but now I can see them out my window again. Sometimes when I'm in the barn I think how I could never capture the relationship we have on camera. They are not tame, but they don't mind my going about my business, and as winter goes by they come up to me and check me out. We look at each other and at times I like to think they appreciate what I do for them. I imagine as I approach the barn, that they look out and say to themselves, "oh, no worries, this is just our shepherdess coming to attend to us." It is this relationship that I love, and I find I cannot share it with anyone else, since as soon as another person comes near, they go on the alert and that is the end of that!

This year I'm keeping Dali (the Llama) in a separate stall. He and Ómar (the ram) fight during breeding season. Svenni, my previous ram, never got uptight with Dali during these months, but Ómar seems to have some issues. So instead of risking having them injure one another I just separated Dali. At first he seemed a bit unhappy about that, but it did not take him long to realize that the ram was not able to get into his space. It is actually very

interesting to watch the two of them trying to communicate, since they don't speak the same language. Dali speaks llama and Ómar speaks sheep. But they have begun to realize to some extent what the other means by certain posturing. If Ómar starts posturing, Dali immediately goes on the defensive and spits on the ram. To this day this spitting does not bother the ram; it does not even make him move. He will end up with green slime all over his face, but he does not seem to care.

I have been wondering about my ram. He has been breeding with my ewes more than once and some ewes more than twice. Usually all breeding is done by mid-December, but this year I have seen breeding going on in late December. I wonder if his fertility is no longer good. He is still in his prime, but we will see what will happen in the Spring when the truth comes out in the form of little lambs. I'm hoping I do not have to go on a hunt for a new ram next summer. It took so long to find this one.

I have been letting the cows roam the hills with access to their hay and water. In the past I enclosed them in a smaller area called the sacrificial area so that the fields don't get too heavily impacted. But I decided to try this other approach, since Raggi was limping, and being able to roam seems to make her better. There are just four adults and two little calves, so I figured I would try it this winter and then reassess the fields in the spring. The calves that were born late summer (Pretty Boy Floyd's offspring) are totally adorable. I call them Iona and Alistair. They love to have the hills to roam and at times run and run and kick their feet in the air just for the fun of it. Raggi is still on the thin side, but she is at least not getting thinner. They have had very nice hay this winter and it seems to be keeping her in OK shape. Skye on the other hand is chubby. Seeing them side by side you really notice the difference. We never did see Skye come into heat, so we are not sure if Pretty Boy Floyd bred with her or not. It would be a big bummer if she did not get bred.



I learned a lot about pigs this year. One thing was that it really is not that great having pigs in the wet season. The second batch of pigs were here until late December and by that time my front yard and more were a total muddy mess. I had brought them there to free up the barn for the sheep, and I wanted them to dig up the grass and weeds right in front of the house. I had not counted on how fast that happened, so I had to expand their area often. Now they are gone and I have one muddy front yard!

Take care you all and you will hear from me again in late spring.



Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*