

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Winter 2012 news from Bone Dry Ridge

Hello All and Happy Winter

This mild and dry winter has me worried. This usually means a cold and rainy spring and summer. We always get about 50 inches of rain per year, and if a lot of it does not come down during our winter months, we get it in the spring and summer. That is what my crystal ball is saying. We'll have to wait and see if it is telling the truth.

Soon you will have an opportunity to invest in your local food security. Over the last two plus years I have been working on a business plan for a creamery with my friend and neighbor, Keith, the dairy man. We plan to make yogurt. Keith has about 50 milking cows, and if our dream becomes a reality, within 5 years we will use all his milk to make local yogurt and other fermented dairy products. The business plan is now done, blueprints have been drawn for the building, all the equipment has been researched



and evaluated, some pieces already purchased as they became available and we had funds. But now the hard part is upon us: fundraising. Keith and I have imagined a number of scenarios. The one that stands out as the most workable option is raising funds through our local community, to make our community a real part of building our local food security system. We have not finalized the options yet, but I wanted you to be aware of this upcoming opportunity. Be on the lookout for an email from me in early to mid-summer regarding this issue. The plan is to have this very high quality local product available in your neighborhood grocery store.

You are probably wondering, "How is she going to have time for it all?" The answer is: I'm not going to do it all myself. I see myself in the future training future shepherdesses, pig herders and chicken flock keepers, as well as yogurt and kefir makers. Once the creamery is in full production, we will have at least three full time people. I will manage the whole thing and tell people what to do. It will be a nice change from doing it all myself. I have lots of skills to pass on, and there comes a time when doing it all my self is just not realistic. At some point in time, younger muscles and backs need to take over.

The sheep are shorn. Tim, the shearer, came over on the 15th of February and sheared them for me. The sheep are so happy to be out of their heavy, warm wool, hopping around and playing, out and about the barn. One cannot help but smile and feel their joy when they play, especially when even the older ones participate. The ram has been so frisky with all that weight off his shoulders. Icelandic sheep lose about 2/3 of their width when they get shorn.

That is how much wool there is. Now there is plenty of space around the bale feeder. Every one has a lot of maneuvering room. Two ladies came to watch the shearing and to buy fleeces.



They were very knowledgeable about wool. I learned a lot from them.

I have ordered the piglets. If everything goes according to plan, they will be here in early April. I'm looking forward to those little rascals. They will be housed in the barn for the first month or two. They will help me dig out the barn, and if it is cold I can add a heat lamp. Then they will move to the woods and have the Taj-Ma-Swine for shelter. It feels good to get ready for the spring rhythm.

The cows are hanging out. This relatively dry winter is nice for them. I wish I had a rain shelter for them. That has been one of the things that I had hoped to have built by now, but it has not happened yet. I certainly worry more about shade for them in the summer than rain shelter in the winter, but hopefully one day they will have such a thing. Abigail is growing well. She takes her looks after her mother. She reminds us a lot of her mother, Raggi when she was a youngster. Skye is very pregnant, and if I remember correctly, she is due in April. It always amazes me the different body types Raggi and Skye are. They are mother and daughter, but don't look at all alike. Skye is round and plump while Raggi is skinny and gangly. It is just the way they are.

It looks like only one beehive is going to survive the winter, down from five last year. We have heard lots of stories from other beekeepers about the yellow jacket attacks last fall. We were not the only ones with that experience. Hopefully we will catch swarms this spring. I don't think we will by buying a queen and her entourage, since the price has gone through the roof. Ten years ago, we could buy a queen and company for \$15. Now they are \$87! There is great shortage of bees. I think we'll see if we can entice a swarm to move into a condo on this hill: protection and sugar water provided in case of emergency.



Your farmer and shepherdess *Selma*