

Bone Dry Ridge

A little bit of everything farm



Fall News 2017 from Bone Dry Ridge

Happy Fall

The weather report: Almost 13" of rain in November. In a normal November it is between 8" and 9". I'm amazed there has been no flooding in the valley. When the rain is spread out enough, the soil can hold on to a lot of water and release it as new rain falls, and no flooding occurs. But when a lot of water comes from the sky all at once, there is trouble. Many of you know that my house is on rainwater collection. So, this is the time of year when I can enjoy as many baths as I like. A bath is the luxury of having plenty of water. When mid-summer comes along quick showers are all you get around here.

Meat Sales: Winter pigs. We are raising pigs again this winter. They will be ready in the spring. To order slick here to get to the brochure.

Pigs: The winter pigs are here. I picked them up the day after I delivered the pork to you, just a three week pause between summer and winter pigs. The new ones are a three way cross this time around: Red Waddle/ Gloucestershire Old Spot/Large Black. They were six weeks old when we picked them up and we could hardly believe how big they were. They looked more like eight weeks old. All the pig are doing wonderfully in Keith's barn. They have been enjoying treats of apples and squash lately. This is the time of plenty of food. They also of course get milk soaked grain every morning. On top of that they always have their feeder full of grain. They seem happy and healthy.

Sheep: The ewes and the ram are home again, enjoying having shelter during this rainy weather. October to February is breeding season. The ewes come into heat every two weeks or so. They usually get bred in the first or second cycle. I have not seen much action lately, so I'm assuming they are all bred. Sometimes I put a breeding harness on the ram so I can see which ewes he has bred. A breeding harness comes with a large crayon. The crayons come in many colors. The idea is that you change the color each month to see which ewes are being bred. This harness gets strapped on the ram in such a way that the crayon sits on his chest. When he mounts the ewe, he leaves a mark on her back. A brilliant and simple method, but it has not worked very well for me. Icelandic sheep are very woolly this time of year, so woolly in fact, it is just about impossible to strap this harness on tightly enough. Smári, my calm and easy-going ram, was so good at letting me strap this on him. He just stood there calmly as I fussed over tightening it and getting it to sit just right. Then three weeks later, and after I saw him breed with a few ewes and leaving no marks, I took it off. It was too loose. He simply is too woolly to have it work.

Cows: The four little Wagyu calves are doing well. They are all very close in age, but one of them is different. He reminds me of the Highland calves that I used to have. He is short and stocky and has thick long hair, whereas the others are tall and short-haired. They are all the same cross-breed but for whatever reason, he stands out as the short, stocky

fellow. It will be interesting to see what he looks like as he grows. We are also looking forward to seeing the next calf this mother cow will have. Will it be similar or not? Perhaps this fellow is the anomaly and we will never have one like it again. We are hoping that these calves will be large enough to slaughter next fall, but since we have not raised this mix before we'll have to wait and see.

Personal note: Late fall and winter is a time to chill out. I find myself reading more and enjoying the fact that darkness comes early. It is not that each day is not packed with activities, but many of them are indoors, so I can stay inside on rainy days. In the summer I pick berries from my berry patch in front of the house, and put them in the freezer. Now is the time I turn these berries into juice. I make Black Current juice, Red Current juice, Black Elderberry juice, Goji Berry Juice and Grape Juice. All these juices are so concentrated that you have to add water. Both Keith and I love to drink juice and in the summer, it is particularly delicious. I also make pig liver pate and lamb sausage. Keith is also enjoying the fall, but he likes to be outside as much as possible. At the moment he is building me a wood shed. My old wood shed is about to fall down and Keith loves to build stuff. He is tougher than most of us. He is out in the pouring rain and not even in rain gear. He just gets wet and keeps going. What a guy. Never a dull moment at this farm.

Hope you all have a good winter.

Take care. Your farmers and shepherdess *Selma and Keith*