

TWO TRACKS ACRES NEWSLETTER

July 2014



TURKEYS

I got a call from the post office that the turkeys had arrived. In the background I could hear the chirping of forty chicks complaining about being cooped up in a box for two days. I told Taik to rush over and get them situated in their spot in the barn. We had gone to a lot of trouble to set up the turkey area in preparation for their arrival. The difficult thing about turkeys is that they cannot come into contact with chickens, or even be in a place where chickens used to be, when they are young because they are susceptible to catching a disease called "blackhead" from chickens. We have a space set up specifically to house chicks, so we hosed it down and spread lime over the entire spot, to help cleanse the area. We were extra careful with our cleaning so as not to endanger the turkeys with chicken residue. I am happy to report that so far they are all very healthy and growing quickly.



We have forty turkeys that we will be raising for Thanksgiving. If you are interested in a fresh Thanksgiving turkey let us know.

NEW COOP AND DUCKING CHICKENS

Our egglayers used to have free reign over the backyard, strutting around anyplace they pleased, which usually included waiting by the front door and leaving chicken droppings for us to step on. In addition, they were wandering further and further afield, until I routinely found them down the driveway next to the road. It was getting out of hand, so we decided enough was enough and built them a new fenced in area. The area is still very large, but it ensures that they are kept separate from the house, the garden, and the road.



Unfortunately, two chickens don't seem to get the message. They have discovered a way out (I still don't know how) and escape from the fence every day only to return in the morning for a bit of breakfast with the rest of the flock. Taik believes that the rogue chickens are suspicious of our intentions to catch them because he sees them duck every time he passes by. I wish they would take a cue from the duck, which is quite happily living among the rest of the chickens as a member of the flock.

SEARCHING FOR PIGS

We are still looking for pigs. I mentioned in an earlier newsletter that a virus has hit many pigs across the country and they are much scarcer than they were last year. The *porcine epidemic diarrhea virus* has an almost 100% mortality rate for young piglets and has killed over 7 million piglets in the past year. Prices for young feeder pigs have tripled. The last people we got our pigs from said they had customers coming from all over the state – Grand Rapids, Lansing, Jackson – just for pigs from that litter. This development has made us seriously consider breeding our own.

The pigs we do have are troublemakers. A few weeks ago the large ones got out from the fenced in area where we keep them. Panicked, we followed the trail of destruction into the neighbor's yard. There they sat contentedly rooting up his lawn. We tried to herd them and push them back home until our neighbor noticed us and came outside to help. He had a trailer but it was too high, and pigs are very wary of ramps. We eventually ended up building a pig "sled" with sides and a curved piece of plywood for the floor. I ushered them inside, and we dragged the whole contraption back to the pen.

The pigs have a certain way of greeting us by snorting and galloping about whenever we draw near. We recently combined two generations of pigs, and Taik believes that the elder one has taken the young'uns under its wing. Whenever he approaches, the little ones run to the back of the enclosure while the big pig swaggers toward him, not exactly aggressive but definitely in an attempt to intimidate (which it does rather successfully).

PRESERVING

The height of summer yields an abundance of food. We have more beans, peppers, and peas than we know what to do with. Taik and I have spent a few afternoons in a hot kitchen blanching and freezing vegetables to store up for the winter. Don't forget to take some time to preserve while food is plentiful!



THANKS AND BE WELL